

MANITOBA HABITAT HERITAGE CORPORATION



ANNUAL REPORT

2016/2017

Manitoba 



Blue-winged Teal, Fred Greenslade

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MANITOBA **HABITAT HERITAGE** CORPORATION

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation is a non-profit provincial Crown Corporation working to sustain biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and community well-being in Manitoba by offering habitat stewardship programs to private landowners.



**MINISTER OF
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba, CANADA
R3C 0V8

Her Honour, the Honourable Janice C. Filmon, C.M., O.M.
Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba
Room 235
Legislative Building
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Your Honour:

I am pleased to submit the Annual Report of the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2017.

Yours sincerely,

The Honourable Rochelle Squires
Minister



Messages from...



**JOHN WHITAKER
CHAIR**

A very important benefit associated with the Corporation's activities concerning the conservation and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat is the increase in the diversity of the rural Manitoba landscape. Diversity of landscape is the base for the diversity of both economic opportunity and social structure. Diversity is also the basis for stability whether we are describing food webs for animals or resilience when faced with extreme climatic events.

It has been especially gratifying for the Corporation to work with groups of municipalities to secure through perpetual conservation agreement, 10,000 acre blocks of essentially natural habitat, one in the Big Grass Marsh area west of Lake Manitoba and another south of Neepawa. These municipalities saw ensuring grazing opportunities for cattle producers and other economic benefits produced by these diverse lands as being required for the sustainability of rural life.

Lessons from the recent Houston catastrophe show the consequences of replacing diverse natural systems for water storage and conveyance with pavement. Whether it is too much water or not enough water, we can build more resilient landscapes across Manitoba by working with the tools Nature has provided – our natural landscapes.

Homegrown conservation.

I have been asked why, after three decades of activity, MHHC would adopt so simple a corporate slogan.

The easiest answer would be a desire to differentiate MHHC from a conservation landscape dominated by national and international organizations. While marketing is always a consideration, when it was first pitched, I was attracted for more subtle reasons.

Established by the *Manitoba Habitat Heritage Act* of the Manitoba Legislature in 1986, MHHC exists to serve the interests of Manitobans. Conservation, restoration and enhancement of wildlife habitat – MHHC's mandate – is part and parcel of the greater desires of Manitobans to sustain ecological goods and services for future generations.

Homegrown doesn't just apply to how MHHC came to be: it is an ethic embedded in the thoughts and actions of MHHC staff and supporters. It's a desire to work with citizens and communities for a cleaner, greener tomorrow. Are citizens noticing? One answer might lie in the fact that MHHC receives more land donations than all other conservation organizations combined in Manitoba.

In a global age where it just makes sense to think beyond ones borders for all kinds of reasons, especially ecological, there remains a consistent thread woven through the 340,000 acres of habitat MHHC has influenced over three decades: a desire to serve the interests and aspirations of Manitobans.



**TIM SOPUCK
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER**

Merlin, Caley Brown

VISION

Habitats across Manitoba's lands and waters sustain biodiversity, healthy ecosystems, and community well-being.

OBJECTS

Conservation, restoration and enhancement of Manitoba fish and wildlife habitats and populations.

MISSION

To be a leader, and a partner of choice, in delivering diverse habitat conservation programs through partnerships with the community and governments.

30 Years

OF MHHC CONSERVATION IN MANITOBA

Table 1: Total habitat accomplishments (acres)

	Prior to 2016/17	In 2016/17	Total
Acquired Properties	14,591	0	14,591
Perpetual Conservation Agreements	177,222	4,863	182,085
Term Conservation Contracts	142,928	452	143,380
Total	334,741	5,315	340,056

14,591

acres of land publically accessible through MHHC

\$59.4 MILLION

value of natural services provided by habitats conserved through MHHC

65,549

acres of habitat donated to MHHC

196,676

acres of natural habitats permanently conserved by MHHC

1,724

landowner participants with MHHC

Overview



HOMEGROWN CONSERVATION

Caley Brown

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation has been delivering “Homegrown Conservation” in partnership with Manitobans for three decades. When its private land conservation projects are added up, MHHC’s total influenced acres are close to the size of Duck Mountain Provincial Park. In 2016/17 MHHC has continued the tradition of cooperative conservation and has achieved 5,315 acres (2,151 ha) of natural habitats conserved and 410 acres (166 ha) restored. While these may seem like simple numbers on a page, these projects represent much more to Manitobans.

This is land where people work, live, and play; where farmers listen to the birds calling while eating lunch; where you can look out the kitchen window and see a deer running by; or where you can float down a river in a canoe. These private conservation lands also give back to people who will never see or experience them first-hand. Natural habitats are filtering the drinking water Manitobans drink, reducing the nutrients in the lakes that Manitobans play in and protecting Manitobans’ homes and livelihoods from climate change, floods and droughts.

These lands also provide space for wildlife to breed, grow and prosper. It is estimated that the wetland habitats conserved this year will allow 80,900 pairs of ducks to raise their young,

the grassland habitats will provide 10 different Species at Risk a safe places to nest and forage and the restored habitats will hold-back 1,659 kg of phosphorus, reducing the risk of lakechoking algal blooms that threaten the fish and aquatic-life of Manitoba.

These benefits are being realized because of the contribution of landowners. Forty landowners placed a perpetual conservation agreement on their property and have ensured that the habitat on their lands is conserved long after they are gone. Twenty-five landowners allowed MHHC to restore wetlands on their property and will keep them for at least ten years. To offer these programs to Manitobans, MHHC worked with all levels of governments; from local conservation districts and U.S. states, to the federal governments of the United States and Canada. MHHC also partners with other conservation organizations, such as the Delta Waterfowl Foundation, to better conserve and manage the land.

About 70% of funds used to achieve these results came from sources other than the provincial government.

MHHC continues to conserve habitats that people and wildlife can call home.

INVESTING IN Manitoba

From arctic tundra to mixed-grass prairie, Manitoba’s diverse landscape provides habitat for a range of healthy wildlife populations. While the majority of Manitoba’s species are considered stable, certain ones have been the focus of management actions designed to grow or enhance their populations. As a long-term funder of MHHC, Environment and Climate Change Canada has provided fundamental contributions to corporation programming. Since the first grant agreement with MHHC in 1991, the Canadian federal government has provided program funding to MHHC on an annual basis.

With funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Corporation is able to offer Manitobans incentives to conserve and enhance waterfowl and species at risk habitat as well as implement watershed health programs. Over time, Environment and Climate Change Canada’s support to MHHC has resulted in \$5.3 million in payments to Manitoba landowners. Additional support has been received to implement term conservation programming as well as program planning and design.



IN 2016/17, THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA SUPPORTED ON-THE-GROUND PROGRAMMING AND PLANNING THROUGH THE:

- North American Waterfowl Management Plan
- Habitat Stewardship Program – Species At Risk Stream
- Habitat Stewardship Program – Prevention Stream
- Species At Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands
- National Wetlands Conservation Fund



CONSERVING MANITOBA'S
Watersheds

964
 acres
CONSERVED

1,659
 kilograms of
PHOSPHORUS
 stored

410
 acres of wetlands
RESTORED

Caley Brown

RESTORING WETLANDS AND STORING NUTRIENTS

Two major forces in conservation came together in Manitoba to deliver the largest award granted through the Lake Winnipeg Basin Stewardship Fund. Ducks Unlimited Canada and MHHC came together to deliver a wetland restoration program specifically designed for the people and ecosystems of Manitoba. The intent of this project was to reduce nutrients moving from fields to waterways, and it was achieved.

While people, particularly farmers, employ many techniques to keep nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen on their land, inevitably, some enters into Manitoba's waterways, including Lake Winnipeg. These nutrients are leading to the eutrophication – the over stimulation of natural processes in lakes and rivers due to the availability of nutrients beyond which is natural - of Lake Winnipeg and many other prairie lakes.

To supplement the "4R" fertilizer management work that farmers are already doing, MHHC and DUC began offering wetland restoration specifically for nutrient retention in 2013. Landowners were paid to restore wetlands on their property and to retain them for at least 10 years. Sixty-nine projects were completed between 2013 and 2017. These projects restored 960 acres (390 ha) of drained wetlands in Manitoba.

Every year, the wetland restorations completed under this project will keep almost 3 tonnes of phosphorus - equivalent in weight to about 150 big bags of lawn fertilizer - on the land and out of Manitoba's waterways.



*Curtis Hullick (MHHC),
 Michelle Duval (ECCO), Dana Hay (ECCO),
 Stephen Carlyle (MHHC), Mark Francis (DUC)*

GOING BACK IN TIME

Like the air that we breathe and the soil that is needed to grow the food that we eat, wetlands are equally as important. These natural ecosystems contribute to the environment by purifying water, assisting with flood control and providing a home for various plants and animals.

Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation offers programs to landowners to conserve and restore wetlands throughout the province.

Last summer, Habitat Conservation Specialist Scott Beaton worked on a number of wetland restoration projects and said that while larger projects are extremely valuable, restoring smaller potholes is also very beneficial to the environment and the land.

The purpose of the restoration project for one landowner, George Curry, was simply to restore an old basin that had been drained many years ago and bring it back to its natural state.

"It wasn't a large project, just a little over nine acres, but it was an important one. Its geographical location and the fact that we recreated a body of water that had been drained more than

30 years ago and brought it back to its historical levels made it a successful restoration," said Beaton.

The land where the project work was done is situated north of Minnedosa, near the top of escarpment and close to Riding Mountain National Park. Since the wetland restoration was done near the top of the escarpment, it helped to alleviate erosion and sedimentation downstream. Restoring wetlands and retaining water high in the watershed has positive effects downstream on infrastructure and to the greater environment.

Beaton said that it was likely drained so that the previous landowner could attempt to crop it. However, as is generally the case, drained wetlands don't often provide ideal land for growing productive crops.

Beaton highlighted that, "restoring wetlands improves the quality of the water. It also allows time for the sediment to settle out and the water to soak into the ground rather than run off and become someone else's problem down the road".



Curry wetland restoration project



Scott Kroeker



ON 50 MEADOW STREET

In a watershed of over one million square kilometres, it is sometimes the little things that really make an impact. The council of a little lake-side village of Dunnottar nestled along the western shore of Lake Winnipeg, donated a conservation agreement on 50 Meadow Street. This 1.8 acres (0.73 ha) of land provides an oasis of trees and wetlands, habitat for the Threatened red-headed woodpecker, and promotes sustainability within the community. When completion of the project was announced at a local sustainability meeting, applause reverberated throughout the room. MHHC was responsible for administering the conservation agreement.

Armand Belanger, East Interlake Conservation District (EICD) Manager, and his team develop and deliver projects throughout the local region. Work is done within the framework of locally-driven integrated watershed management plans. Belanger views

these documents as "guidelines towards watershed sustainability that are developed at the local level". A key part of the District's four plans is the protection of natural areas. "Easements are a great tool for the protection of natural areas which filter out nutrients and contaminants, and provide a range of other ecological goods and services like carbon sequestration."

Under the partnership between MHHC and EICD, over 850 acres (344 ha) of natural habitats have been protected, including over 200 acres (80 ha) of wetland restoration. Belanger noted, "the general public see many benefits from agreements and conservation partnerships, like those with MHHC". From small one-acre projects to hundred-acre wetland restorations, MHHC and the EICD are helping to ensure sustainable watershed management along the shores of one of Canada's great lakes.

CONSERVATION DISTRICT *Partnerships*

MHHC has been a partner with Conservation Districts since 2001 to deliver conservation projects across Manitoba. The province of Manitoba has identified watershed-based planning and delivery as a cornerstone of conservation programming in agricultural communities.

Conservation District	Prior to 2016/17		In 2016/17		Total	
	CAs	Acres	CAs	Acres	CAs	Acres
Assiniboine Hills	3	442	-	-	3	442
East Interlake	8	371	6	487	14	858
La Salle Redboine	6	806	-	-	6	806
Little Saskatchewan	6	255	1	94	7	350
Pembina Valley	11	1,478	3	224	14	1,701
Seine Rat River	3	182	1	15	4	197
Swan Lake Watershed	2	217	-	-	2	217
Turtle Mountain	25	4,064	1	138	26	4,202
Turtle River Watershed	1	79	-	-	1	79
Upper Assiniboine River	1	80	-	-	1	80
Whitemud Watershed	24	54,117	2	143	26	54,260
Total	90	62,091	14	1,101	104	63,191

Photo by
Caley Brown

WHAT IS A CONSERVATION AGREEMENT?

A conservation agreement (CA) is an easement, which permanently maintains the habitat, water quality and biological diversity of the land without affecting the parcel's ownership.

Through a CA, a landowner may continue to use and manage the property as they have in the past while making a long-term contribution to the environment. Landowners receive financial compensation for signing a CA in the form of a cash payment or a tax receipt.

CONSERVING MANITOBA'S

Wetlands

496,366

acres
MAPPED
for wetlands

2,772

acres of wetlands
CONSERVED

2,676

nesting tunnels
MAINTAINED

167,956

DUCKS
living on
conserved habitat

SUCCESS IN ACTION



MHHC's longest running program is its wetland conservation work under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. This plan, and the actions it has spurred, has become world-renowned as a conservation delivery model. Since 1986, MHHC has played a key role in the coordination, development, reporting and delivery of this plan in Manitoba and across the Canadian Prairies.

Responding to changes in agricultural markets and practises, and evolutions in waterfowl science, an update to the North American Waterfowl Management Plan was produced in 2012. This work led to the development of a new implementation plan for wetland and waterfowl conservation in the Canadian Prairies. While this revised delivery plan is being put in place by a variety of conservation stakeholders, work conducted by MHHC, one of three main stakeholders working in Manitoba, is making key contributions to continental management of waterfowl populations.

MHHC accomplishments relative to its 2013 - 2020 Waterfowl Habitat Objectives

Habitat Protection

108%

In Target Landscapes

Habitat Restoration

69%

In Target Landscapes



DELTA WATERFOWL

With its roots at Delta Marsh, on the south shore of Lake Manitoba, the Delta Waterfowl Foundation (Delta) delivers on its founding objective of waterfowl conservation and research. Founded in 1911, Delta continues to shape waterfowl conservation in Manitoba and across North America.

Known as the "Duck Hunters Organization", Delta and its members recognize the need to maintain and improve waterfowl populations in North America. Scientific journals are filled with fundamental research produced by Delta students over the past 100 years. This historic and continuing research has led to development and adaptation of real-world waterfowl conservation programs currently being implemented by Delta, MHHC and other conservation organizations.

MHHC continues to work with Delta and its U.S. State partners in the perpetual conservation of duck habitat and the installation of artificial duck nests, "Hen Houses", which greatly minimizes the natural loss of nests due to predation. This powerful combination of conservation and production tools work to ensure healthy waterfowl populations will remain in North America.

However, the tried-and-true isn't the status quo for Delta. It continues to push the conservation community into new delivery frontiers that look to accommodate conservation within the working landscape of the Great Plains. Delta helped to initiate the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program, upon which, the province of Manitoba is now modelling new environmental program delivery. In fact, delivering a new ALUS-like program is a priority action item for the Minister of Sustainable Development, as stated in the mandate letter sent to the department by the Premier of Manitoba.

HOME FOR FAMILY, HOME FOR WILDLIFE



Finding a meaningful way to honour someone after they have passed can sometimes be difficult, but it wasn't for Fran and Laura Stenhouse.

Their husband and father, Tom Stenhouse, passed away in 2007 and while the idea to preserve the quarter section of land that Tom and Fran purchased in 1974 percolated for awhile, they knew that it was the perfect way to honour his memory.

"We worked in town. Tom had a tire shop and I taught, but Tom had always wanted to farm. So we bought the quarter, moved the house out here when Laura, our only child, was just two-years old and started farming," said Fran.

The Stenhouse family set up a small livestock operation with cattle, pigs and a few chickens. They eventually bought additional grazing land and used the original quarter with 90 acres (36 hectares) of cultivated land to plant oats to feed the animals.

"He had a passion for farming. Even after he had a massive stroke in 1986, he continued to farm. He was half paralyzed, but a friend modified the tractor so he could still work the land. He was so strong, so determined to work. He loved to work and he loved the farm," said Laura.

And that is why Fran and Laura decided to work with the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation to develop a conservation agreement for their property. The agreement ensures that the land remains as is, meaning the heavily wooded areas won't be bulldozed and the wetlands won't be drained. They refer to it as an oasis for wildlife and want to ensure that it is preserved.

The land today is used for haying and is rented to a neighbouring farmer for that purpose. It provides habitat for nesting ducks and the wetlands on the property are full of different species of waterfowl. Fran and Laura share the yard site after Laura moved a house onto the property thirteen years ago. As Laura has been faced with several health issues of her own, the property gives back to her, just like it did her father.

"I am so thankful for this land and this farm. I can't imagine having a severe migraine in the city. I have quiet, peaceful space. I look out my door and I see peace, green, calm - all healthy and good. It's also become sort of a respite for some of my city friends. They come out to enjoy the space, they hike and revel in what they discover out here. I feel incredibly blessed that I'm here," said Laura.

Pictured below: Fran Stenhouse and Laura Stenhouse



CONSERVATION IN THE *Family*



“We have three independent farms, but we’re all on the same page when it comes the conservation work with Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation.”

– Alistair Hagan

Caley Brown



The Hagan Family

Three families, three separate farming operations and almost 5,000 acres (2,023 hectares) of conserved land. Truly, a historic achievement for Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC) made possible by Virden-area cattle ranchers that just happen to all be from the same family.

Shawne and Jocelyn Hagan started the trend when as they were the first to sign a conservation agreement with MHHC in 2005. While their sons, Alistair and Thomas, grew up on the family farm, they’ve since branched out to establish their own operations nearby with the help of their life and business partners, Erin and Felicity.

“Dad was the first one to sign up. But, as we starting buying land we started utilizing the programs as well. As young producers, it enabled us to buy the land. It would have been very difficult to buy it without the help of the (MHHC) programs,” said Thomas.

While these families don’t consider themselves hardcore conservationists, their actions speak louder than words. MHHC has been working with the Hagan family since 2005 and together they have 15 conservation agreements in place.

“If everybody bulldozes, if everybody drains, we won’t have any natural habitat left. The more we learn, we realize that in our ranching business we don’t want to fight nature, we want to try to work with it. It is challenging and it is not my responsibility to save the entire world, but I think it is my responsibility to leave this land for the next generation,” said Alistair.

This win-win partnership brought further attention to the Hagan family as they were recently awarded the North American Waterfowl Management Plan’s National Blue-winged Teal Award for the benefits that their easements have for waterfowl and other wetland birds. The annual award is presented by the international NAWMP partnership.

“We certainly feel good about what we’re doing and our practices. I don’t know if we’re that different from everyone else, but there’s definitely a movement that we’re part of. With regenerative agriculture, the whole point is looking at the ecosystem as a whole. If you’re benefiting your cows, you are also benefiting the bird population, the bug population and the pollinators. We’re calving on the grass... we’re in sync with nature and we’re focused on putting carbon in the soil,” said Thomas.

The Hagans consider themselves to be outdoor enthusiasts and are extremely interested in providing a substantial habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife. They look for balance whether it comes to using the land for recreation or to make a living off of it.

“You can’t always take from the land, sometimes you have to give back. A true outdoor enthusiast respects the land and only harvests what they need. If you look at grassland, you take from it by grazing, but the cattle give back more than what they take so they are truly better for the land,” said Alistair. “I don’t think there are many families out there that are all on the same page. We have three independent farms, but we’re all on the same page when it comes the conservation work with Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation”.

CONSERVING MANITOBA'S

Species at Risk

10

species at risk
BENEFITTING

1,127

acres
CONSERVED

6

PARTNERS
in species at risk
programs



Caley Brown

INVASION OF THE SHRUBS

Many of us in Manitoba are familiar with grassland where we often see cows grazing and small birds singing from the fence posts.

While we admire the livestock and wildlife, we often don't realize that there's potentially a natural, invasive plant species that could be taking over the grassland.

"What a lot of livestock producers tend to not pay much attention to on their pastureland is wolf willow and the western snowberry," said Carol Graham, Habitat Conservation Specialist for the Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation (MHHC).

"They are both native shrubs to the prairies, but having an abundance of this type of vegetation isn't positive for the health of a pasture, grassland birds, or for the grazing practices of their livestock."

As a result, specialists like Graham have a keen eye on the land to identify when these shrubs might be out of control and inform the landowner on how they might be able to get better utilization of their pasture.

"Producers can take advantage of our mowing program, which basically means that we go out on the pasture, at an ideal time of year, and mow the areas that are being taken over by wolf willow or snowberry," said Graham. In 2016-17 MHHC managed the shrubs on almost 1,000 acres (405 hectares) of native grasslands in the southwest corner of Manitoba.

Long-term shrub reductions can take some time to achieve. One target quarter was originally mowed in

2013, with great shrub reductions in the first and second year; however, with a change in precipitation and moisture the shrubs started to make a comeback.

"What I find with these shrubs is that they are a little frustrating. You can set it back and you think you've been successful and then we're hit with a dry season and the shrubs take off again. We're definitely learning that the shrubs respond well to dry periods, especially in more sandy soil, but don't thrive very well in wet conditions," said Graham.

To combat the regrowth, Graham said they had the opportunity, based on available funding and timing, to mow the pasture a second time in 2015, again with favourable results.

"The main benefit to mowing is better pasture utilization. The cows immediately start using areas of the pasture that they couldn't access prior to mowing. Once the cows start grazing on the grass, it stimulates the grass and weakens the shrub." Over time, with repeated management, these grasslands will remain open grassland, providing both improved habitat for native grassland species and improved pastures for cattle.

Mowing is advantageous for several Species at Risk, such as the Sprague's pipit, chestnut-collared longspur, and loggerhead shrike, as it improves their habitat by increasing the amount of open grassland where these birds thrive.

Photos below by Christian Artuso



MHHC - Species at Risk



WHAT IS A CONSERVATION CONTRACT?

Ten year habitat conservation contracts are available in targeted locations based on project-specific criteria. MHC offers these contracts on wetlands that are being restored and on native prairie grasslands with species at risk for projects to improve pasture management. Ten year contracts are also signed when MHC erects hen houses (waterfowl nesting structures) on a wetland.

Caley Brown

KEEP GRAZING

Keeping up with the latest thing seems like a never ending struggle, so it is a relief to know that sometimes the old fashioned way really is best. Cattle producers across the province understand this when they rely on native prairie grasses to feed their cows. Similar to how herds of bison once roamed the prairies, cattle play an important role in keeping prairie in its native state. This, in turn, is important for grassland bird species which rely on these native grasslands.

Some species, such as the Sprague's pipit, burrowing owl, or the loggerhead shrike, have been put at-risk because of a loss of their natural habitat. They rely heavily on native prairie grasslands and their species are now vulnerable because of the changes to, or losses of, native grasslands over the years. Once native prairie grassland is lost, it is nearly impossible to restore, so keeping what we have is vital.

"Our producers are using the land in such a way that they are enhancing the environment and protecting a valuable part of the ecosystem. Native prairie grassland is typically used by cattle producers to pasture cattle, so we're not part of the problem, we're actually part of the solution to prairie bird conservation. By using sound pasture management practices we're doing our part in preserving these natural grasslands," said Brian Lemon, General Manager of the Manitoba Beef Producers.

To support agricultural producers in their role as stewards of important species at risk habitat, Environment and Climate Change Canada introduced the Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) program to organizations in Manitoba.

The Manitoba Beef Producers, West Souris River Conservation District, Turtle Mountain Conservation District, Bird Studies Canada, and Important Bird Areas partnered with MHC in the delivery of SARPAL in southwest Manitoba. As well, Manitoba Agriculture also partnered with MHC to develop Species at Risk information and beneficial management practices for delivery in association with their Environmental Farm Plan program.

MHC's role in these two partnerships is to deliver information and incentives, primarily targeting cattle producers, to implement management practices that work towards improving habitat quality for species at risk. Some examples of incentives available include: fencing that supports improved grazing, watering systems designed to improve cattle distribution and establishing additional tame pastures to help relieve grazing pressure on native prairie grassland.

These voluntary programs allow producers to further their land stewardship efforts while maintaining viable operations that continue to raise nutritious beef for all of us to enjoy.



SARPAL announcement by the Honourable Terry Duguid. Left to right: Tim Sopuck (MHC), Terry Duguid (MP, Winnipeg South), Christian Artuso (Bird Studies Canada), Shane Robins (Manitoba Conservation Districts Association), Brian Lemon (Manitoba Beef Producers)

TOP 5

Species at Risk

IN 2016/17

1  Sprague's Pipit
2,345
 acres conserved
941
 acres managed

2  Loggerhead Shrike
2,173
 acres conserved
319
 acres managed

3  Baird's Sparrow
2,198
 acres conserved
578
 acres managed

4  Chestnut-collared Longspur
1,936
 acres conserved
792
 acres managed

5  Ferruginous Hawk
1,903
 acres conserved
25
 acres managed

All images by Christian Artuso.

CONSERVING MANITOBA'S

Habitat Values

14,591

acres of land
PUBLICALLY
available through
MHHC

\$59.4
MILLION

VALUE OF SERVICES
provided to Manitobans by
natural habitats conserved
by MHHC, including such
things as nutrient capture
and water retention

403

CATTLE GRAZING
on MHHC lands

Caley Brown



MANAGING FOR DIVERSITY

The MHC Pryzner property

Diversity. This is so important when it comes to the management of land for wildlife conservation. From the smallest beetle to the largest elk, Manitoba is home to a wide range of native species that can live alongside people and can thrive with the right management.

Almost 30 years ago, MHC began testing different management techniques on a section of land purchased from the Pryzner family in Shoal Lake. This began a long process of integrating wildlife benefits on a working piece of property. Being in the heart of Manitoba's waterfowl breeding area, the property was purchased using funds targeted for increasing duck populations.

This property provided an opportunity for MHC and its local Habitat Conservation Specialist, Roy Bullion, to pilot novel techniques to enhance duck breeding capacity and success under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. While the purpose of the project was to conserve habitat for waterfowl, Bullion has been able to use his prairie and land management skills to benefit other wildlife as well.

There has been a diversity of management techniques applied over the years. To bring the property into the mix of habitats currently seen, MHC has completed prescribed burns, tillage, forage seeding, haying, shrub mowing and wetland restoration. The range of existing and restored habitat on this property –

grassland, haylands, sloughs, potholes and woodlands – has long been shared with livestock.

“There are three paddocks for pasturing cattle. There's only about 90 acres of grass for grazing, but because we rotate the herd through three seasons to different areas, it is very effective and has allowed us to maintain a full stocking complement as well. Plus, the northeast corner has alfalfa, which is hayed by a local farmer,” said Bullion.

But, MHC is not in the cattle business, it is in the business of wildlife conservation. Fortunately, effective use of cows will result in effective wildlife habitat. Bird species prefer different nesting cover in terms of structure, height and arrangement; this property more than meets the needs to attract a variety of birds. With a trained eye, you're likely able to find eight or more upland nesting waterfowl species, four or five water-nesting species, and scores of songbirds, hawks and owls. And that is not even mentioning the four-legged animals that share the pastures and haylands with the cattle.

“We're pleased how we've been able to successfully manage this section over the years. By using cattle, we fertilize the grass, manage the cover, increase soil organic matter and partner with local producers, all while working within the mandate of managing the land for wildlife.”



Roy Bullion (MHC) beside the cairn on the Pryzner property

MHHC 2016/17 PARTNERS

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Association of Manitoba Municipalities
- Bird Studies Canada
- Delta Waterfowl Foundation
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- East Interlake Conservation District
- Environment and Climate Change Canada
- International Institute for Sustainable Development
- Keystone Agricultural Producers
- La Salle Redboine Conservation District
- Landowners
- Little Saskatchewan River Conservation District
- Manitoba Agriculture
- Manitoba Beef Producers
- Manitoba Conservation Districts Association
- Manitoba Forestry Association
- Manitoba Infrastructure
- Manitoba Sustainable Development
- Manitoba Wildlife Federation
- Nature Manitoba
- Pembina Valley Conservation District
- Prairie Habitat Joint Venture
- Seine Rat River Conservation District
- State of Arkansas
- State of Illinois
- State of Mississippi
- State of Wisconsin
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Turtle Mountain Conservation District
- United States Fish and Wildlife Service
- Upper Assiniboine River Conservation District
- West Souris River Conservation District
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