



Marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*

From your Publisher:

Welcome to the Wildflower News for June. To counteract the disrespectful and willful damage being done to our river valley and the Gibbons badlands as written about in our two articles this month, we have so many beautiful photos submitted by people who care about preserving our biodiversity, helping pollinators, and doing their bit to conserve our dwindling wildflowers and habitats. We thank them.

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Native Plants in Local Gardens

WN: Keep sending us pics of your "natural" flower beds and yards that include some or a lot of local Edmonton native wildflowers. We love 'em! Overviews of the beds, and close-ups of the flowers would be lovely, as would some info on whether the plants are in full sun, early morning sun, dappled sun, or full shade.

Your general location in the city (i.e. SE, NW, Central, etc.) would be appreciated, as would letting us have permission to use the photos in future publications, slide presentations, our social media, etc. ENPG always indicates photographer, if known, for any photo we use.

Send your photos to engedmonton@gmail.com

From Tiina Payson: Little patch of rescued prairie in our garden with prairie crocus, *Pulsatilla nuttalliana*, in bloom. For a couple of years after transferring the patch, there was no sign that we had a prairie crocus in it; then one year a few leaves appeared, then one flower, now two! The cinquefoil, *Potentilla gracilis*, is coming up nicely right behind them. The marsh marigold, *Caltha palustris*, leaves behind the rocks (in our mini faux slough) are coming up too. Love it when they bloom. So cheerful.



From Manna Parseyan: Some photos from my garden I took recently. Crowfoot violet, *Viola pedatifida*; early blue violet with white flower variations, *Viola adunca*; buffalo bean, *Thermopsis rhombifolia*.



From Alan Jones: Some pictures of my boulevard garden as of 29th May 2020. I am quite pleased with it. Seeds for aquilegia, showy Jacob's-ladder and shootingstar were all obtained from Wild About Flowers in Calgary in 2015 when I first started the garden. They were all grown from seed.



Shootingstars, *Primula* sp.



Woodland strawberry, *Fragaria virginiana* and cut-leaved anemone, *Anemone multifida*. Showy Jacob's-ladder, *Polemonium pulcherrimum*. My pride and joy...yellow columbine, *Aquilegia flavescens*.



From Patrick Kyle: This is one of six *Viola adunca* (Early Blue Violets) that I planted in the lawn last year. I just have to remember not to mow too low. I grew them from seeds last spring. I dig out the dandelions in the lawn that leaves a few holes. So I transplanted the violets into the old dandelion holes.

From Hubert Taube: Crowfoot violets, *Viola pedatifida*, in my front yard. A patch of four.



WN: Gosh! Such impressive and wonderfully different ideas for using our native wildflowers in your own gardens. Thank you all so much for sharing these with the rest of us.

EVENTS - if you would like to post an event that involves native flowers, please email us at engedmonton@gmail.com

From Patsy Cotterill - **Thursday, June 4 - Nisku Prairie Raking Bee** - Please join me to help rake off some of the grass litter that has accumulated in the Prairie over the winter, with the idea of spurring growth of the new vegetation underneath. If you plan to come, please email me (nutmeg@telus.net) beforehand so that I can avoid a crowd!! (Also for weather updates.) Ideally, I'm looking for half a dozen people who can bring their own rakes, gardening gloves and (yes, I'm afraid) bug spray. We can practise social distancing while we work, and when we take a walk in the Prairie to check what's in flower.

I'll be happy to provide any necessary directions to the Prairie when participants register.

Time: 7 - 8:30pm



The presence of Plains Rough Fescue (*Festuca hallii*) in a grassland indicates a remnant natural community that has not been disturbed. This densely tufted, fine-leaved grass does not flower reliably year after year. Let's hope it has a good flowering year in Nisku Prairie in 2020!

Three-flowered avens (*Geum triflorum*) is a common herb at Nisku Prairie, with its rather fern-like leaves that hug the ground and its characteristic inflorescence of three, pink, drooping flowers. Its fruits are also attractive: upright, pink feather-dusters that, en masse, account for the plant's alternative name of Prairie Smoke.

June 11 - 14 - Edmonton BiodiverCITY Challenge

The ENPS supports the Edmonton BiodiverCITY Challenge with the principal organizer being the Alberta Biomonitoring Institute (ABMI). The event is modelled after the City Nature Challenge (CNC) first conceived in California 4 years ago and now involving 244 cities worldwide. The purpose is to document biological species present in urban centres and includes a friendly competition to see which city has the most species, observations and observers.

In Edmonton, the name has morphed to “Edmonton BiodiverCITY Challenge” along with a change in dates from April to June. Details and updates about the event can be found at biodivercity.ca. NatureLynx will be the preferred platform for reporting observations, although others apps might be considered.

The NatureLynx app can be downloaded on desktop and mobile devices by going to naturelynx.ca, hit sign up, create username and password and you are ready to go. It will help if you familiarize yourself with the functions Newsfeed, Species Gallery, Add Sighting, Groups and Missions. To participate in the BiodiverCITY event go to Missions and join. The simplest way to report an observation is to take your mobile phone to your favourite site, log in, hit the camera icon, take a picture (up to 5), provide species name and species group (can be left as unknown)

and submit. Alternatively, you can take a picture with your camera, import it on your desktop device and the upload it to the NatureLynx app using similar procedures as for the mobile device.

In the early planning stages of the event a series of group activities was envisaged, but due to COVID-19 everything has gone to individual observations. Nevertheless, we are attempting some virtual coordination. Whitemud North, Whitemud South, Terwillegar, Hermitage, Kennedale Ravine and Rundle Park have been declared hotspots for observations. However, observing in any part of the City is acceptable. One possibility that I suggest is that members select the area that is within a 2 -km radius of their home as their preferred location.

Hubert Taube, at taubeha@shaw.ca, is the ENPS lead for this event and will be responsible for any coordination activities. Please contact him for any clarifications, any indication of participation etc. Also watch the ABMI biodivercity.ca website, the ENPS Facebook site for any further developments.

June 27 - ENPS native Plant Sale - Finally, with the easing of the COVID restrictions, we are going to hold a sale of native plants. Observing precautions still in place such as the the 6' distancing, and wearing of masks will be appreciated.

Time: 11:00 am to 3:00 pm

Location: Parking lot in front of the Orchid Resource Centre, 4457 99 St NW

NEWS... *If you have a news item involving native plants that you would like posted, please email us at engedmonton@gmail.com*

City of Edmonton Front Yards in Bloom

It's that time once again!

Nominations for the Natural Yard category can be submitted up till June 30th on the City of Edmonton website frontyardsinbloom.ca.

Nominate a friend's yard or a neighbours, or arrange for a friend to nominate your yard. You do not have to have all native plants, although the more native species the better!

Are We Entitled to Treat our River Valley as One Giant Gym? - by Patsy Cotterill

Media watchers will be aware that another case of illegal cutting down of trees in the river valley was recently reported (<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/trees-illegally-cut-down-in-edmontons-river-valley-parkland-overlooking-downtown-skyline/>). It was an egregious act of selfishness, damaging public property for private gain, presumably to obtain a better view, or possibly for the pleasure of sheer destruction. It speaks to an ingrained sense of entitlement. Besides this, it speaks to ignorance, a failure to understand and value trees, natural landscapes and nature in general.

This sense of entitlement manifests itself in a variety of ways. One problem that has become increasingly obvious over the last few years to those who frequent the river valley, especially people who visit different parks and areas, is the explosion of narrow, beaten earth side trails that has taken place. They emanate from the main trails, and are especially abundant on the banks and escarpments of the ravines. These trails are not sanctioned by the City and in fact contravene the Parkland bylaw that forbids destruction of vegetation*. Although some hikers may use them, the chief trail-makers are mountain bikers, who use these "short-cuts," with their steep slopes and root-knotted hazards, to give them their recreational thrills. These illegal trails are now so numerous that they form an extensive network throughout the entire river valley and ravine system. Ecologically they are a disaster; they scar the landscape; they fragment habitat ensuring that there are few parts of the river valley where wildlife can be free of human influence, and they facilitate the spread of weeds.

Perhaps even worse, they demonstrate this attitude of entitlement: this is public land, and I am entitled to do whatever I feel like in it. (In fact, I challenge the authorities to stop me!) Nowhere is this entitlement more blatantly demonstrated and encouraged than online, where websites openly advertise these trails, many of them violating a city bylaw, to their followers. A friend recently remonstrated with a couple of bikers in the sensitive Tufa Springs area in Whitemud Creek Park South, regarded as a nature preserve and officially off-limits to cyclists and signposted thus. They replied that they were entitled to ride there because the trail was marked on a trails website!

Just recently we heard that the City will be calling for public consultations on the central Ribbon of Green Plan this fall, and expects that commuter cyclists will lobby to have access to the gravel trails in Whitemud Parks. The City may look favourably upon this request, because bicycle commuting is promoted as a wellness policy. But anyone who has ever been on a multi-use trail knows that it is good for no-one; the walkers have constantly to get out of the way of the cyclists, who usually don't bother to slow down, but do have to ring their bells for pedestrians! (Some do have the courtesy to thank pedestrians for moving out of the way.) Members of the Edmonton Nature Club will strongly oppose any attempt to allow cycling in the Whitemud Reserves. It's tough to bird- and plant-watch when cyclists are constantly zooming by. And if the bicycle commuters get the green light to use Whitemud, won't that make it impossible to keep the mountain bikers out?

A combination of the arrival of spring and the COVID pandemic has meant that the river valley has seen an exponential increase in use and abuse. In the future, this may be the new normal. The new City Plan estimates that within the next 20-30 years the population of Edmonton will have doubled in size, to 2 million people. At the same time, the City's Ribbon of Green policy is primarily about access, as well as managing use in the river valley. Moreover, its Open Spaces policy, *Breathe*, proposes to rely heavily on the river valley and ravines to provide equitable access to green

space for residents. Here too, the focus is on providing recreational opportunity, rather than conservation. One solution to relieving pressure on the river valley might be to build more recreation centres and velodromes, but in a city stretched to accommodate a doubling of residents, how likely is it that they will keep up with such infrastructure?

Remember in the early days of COVID the news reports that wildlife were becoming less timid and expanding their ranges given that humans were staying indoors? The converse of this must therefore be true; wildlife retract their ranges and contract their habitat with an increase in human presence. If the present attitude prevails, on the part of both the public and the City, that the river valley is one giant outdoors gym, then in the future we can expect it to degenerate into a degraded, weedy, urban park, with fewer, decadent trees and a non-native understory. There will be some birds, but otherwise only those species that can co-habit with humans in an urban environment. The river valley has been touted as an ecological corridor, the backbone of a connected system of natural areas. However, the City makes only faltering attempts to instil ecological literacy in its residents and, 21st century though it is, has not understood the importance of proper management of its natural forests in the river valley.

If you agree with this assessment, please make your views known to your City councillor, and send in pictures of illegal uses and abuses in city parks and the valley and ravines. Council and administration need to understand that the City must take bold steps to counter this sense of entitlement that leads to destruction of what should be the city's best asset!



A network of user-created trails creates vegetation islands in the sensitive Tufa Springs area of Whitemud Park South reserve.



Illegal bike trail on escarpment in Mackinnon Ravine, 2018.



Brookside, above Whitemud Creek, June 2019: L. Deliberate terrace creation on part of a trail. C. Part of same trail, on steep slope. R. Damage to vegetation.

**Parkland bylaw 2202 is inadequate to protect against the proliferation of user-generated trails. Under a section entitled "Preservation of Natural Areas" it states: "While on Parkland [which it defines] no person shall (a) enter into any undeveloped or natural area other than on an Improved Trail or on an Unimproved Trail; Unimproved Trail is defined as "an identifiable path, track or public right-of-way intended for use by pedestrians and Vehicles other than Motor Vehicles that has: (1) a surface width equal to or greater than a half metre; and (ii) a natural surface. Once a trail has been created (by destruction of vegetation) and constant compaction of soil, it is invariably more than 0.5 m wide, and has a natural surface, so mountain bikers, runners and hikers can say they are legitimately entitled to use it! See the problem?"*

Gibbons Badlands Update by Kathleen Mpulubusi

There is a group of residents in Gibbons who feel that the Sturgeon River valley is their personal playground. They feel it is “their valley” and really it’s just grass and dirt. What’s the harm? Well, we know the harm. Ruted tracks, bare earth, chopped down trees, and litter. In February the snowmobilers were having fun roaring up and down the hills. Now it’s the ATV crowd’s turn. And all this happening in an area the town of Gibbons is trying to protect. The badlands prairie area was fenced in 2014 with signs put up asking people to “treat the area with respect”. Unfortunately, the ATV crowd has a different idea of respect.



Why is this little patch of prairie so special? This is a unique area with virtually undisturbed prairie and plants not normally found this far north. The bare soil is covered with lichens that help to stabilize the slopes as well as other lichens on the rocks and trees. Lichens need a clean unpolluted area to thrive and serve as a “canary in the coal mine” to environmental damage.



Two of the many Lichen species to be seen on the badlands.

Members of the Edmonton Native Plant Society have often been the lone voice in trying to raise awareness of the need to protect this area. Now more local residents are becoming involved. They are tired of the entitled attitude of some of the ATV users and recognize the need to protect the Sturgeon River valley. The Town of Gibbons is currently developing a Master Plan for the valley including the badlands area. There was supposed to be public hearings in March but with C-19 the hearings have been postponed. When the hearings resume this will be the best chance to make our concerns heard. There is also a Facebook group, [Gibbons Sturgeon River Valley Trail](#), that has become a good forum for residents and concerned people to connect. There is also discussion of forming a stewardship group to work on protecting the area. Once the Covid-19 restrictions are lifted there will be meetings and more activity. Stay tuned!

Last minute:

The South East Community League Association is working with the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute to set up a free webinar to promote the Edmonton BiodiverCity Challenge (see June 11-14 under EVENTS above). The webinar will be June 9th at 6 pm. Here is the link for the Facebook event: https://www.facebook.com/events/627415338118580/?active_tab=about

Also, here is the registration link to just go directly to the webinar: <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/9047717764972885774>

Websites of the Month:

Alberta Wildflowers, Plants, Trees is a wonderful Facebook page to browse through. Lots of photos and useful information on each plant from all over the province with some stunning photos of southern Alberta and mountain plants that we don't see here.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/121016917930963/>

Robin Wall Kimmerer: People can't understand the world as a gift unless someone shows it to them.

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/may/23/robin-wall-kimmerer-people-cant-understand-the-world-as-a-gift-unless-someone-shows-them-how?>

Lifetime ENPS Membership

You can now become an Edmonton Native Plant Society member for life. Memberships are \$20 and can be purchased by emailing enpgmembership@gmail.com or visit one of our booths at plant events in your area.

Aims of the Edmonton Native Plant Society:

- Promote knowledge of the Edmonton area native plants.
- Conserve our native plant species and their habitats.
- Preserve native plant species and habitat for the enjoyment of present and future generations.
- Educate individuals, business and local governments about native plants.

Please send compliments, concerns and complaints to engedmonton@gmail.com.

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Lady's-slipper orchid, *Cypripedium parviflorum*