



MANITOBA  
HABITAT  
HERITAGE  
CORPORATION



## ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

Homegrown conservation since 1986.

# OVERVIEW



*Mallard, Jeff Dyck*



*Kingfisher, Jeff Dyck*

## MANITOBA **HABITAT HERITAGE** CORPORATION

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation is a non-profit Crown corporation working to maintain biodiversity and water quality in Manitoba by delivering habitat stewardship programs in partnership with public and private organizations, and landowners.

## Partnerships are key to the success of The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation.

Through the support of fourteen funding partners in fiscal year 2013/14, MHHC was able to work with 51 landowners to conserve, restore or enhance about 8,500 acres (3,440 ha) of habitat in Manitoba. This work also led to over \$1.4 million in donation receipts and payments to landowners. MHHC programs improved and maintained wildlife habitat and provide an estimated \$38 million annually in ecological goods and services to the residents of Manitoba.

An investment in Manitoba's habitat is an investment in its people, its economy and the long-term sustainability of the Province.

## MHHC OVERVIEW

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation was founded with a core principle; it would be an organization focussed on partnerships and collaboration. It would collaborate with residents of Manitoba—the landowners and land stewards of the province—and achieve its conservation successes through the fostering of partnerships with other conservation delivery organizations, funding partners and agricultural producer groups. This core principle continues to be reflected in MHHC’s strategic plan and, most importantly, in its achievements on-the-ground.

By working with landowners in Manitoba, MHHC was able to permanently conserve about 7,600 acres (3,080 ha) of wetland and upland habitat in fiscal year 2013/14. This was achieved by partnering with 51 individual landowners and fourteen separate funding sources. One major partner, Environment Canada, announced \$2.2 million in multi-year funding for MHHC and the Critical Wildlife Habitat Program for conservation works related to species at risk, wetlands and waterfowl, and nutrient capture. Funding support such as this allowed MHHC to provide Manitoba landowners over \$1.03 million in direct incentive payments with an additional \$0.39 million in donation receipts this year.

A new focus for 2013/14 was the expanded delivery of MHHC’s Conservation Contracts. With support from Wildlife

Habitat Canada (pg. 14 and 15) and the Lake Winnipeg Basin Stewardship Fund (pg. 11), MHHC restored or enhanced 857 acres (347 ha) of wetland habitat under 10-year term contracts. These voluntary contracts represent an evolution of MHHC programming designed to maximize its beneficial impacts on the environment, reflect the current needs of landowners, and still be rooted in the best available conservation science.

Another evolution in programming is seeing MHHC develop technical expertise in wetland mapping. This work will be used to inform provincial policy as well as local and regional land use decision making. Under the new Wetland Inventory Program, MHHC is working with provincial partners to map wetland type, size and location (pg. 18). This fiscal year MHHC’s wetland mapping was focussed on the southeastern boreal and Interlake regions of Manitoba.

In 2013/14, The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation continued its commitment to, and investment in, Manitoba’s people and environment. In announcing funding for MHHC, federal Minister of Public Safety, the Honourable Vic Toews stated; “this investment in our natural environment supports the strong connection that all prairie communities have in ensuring the health of our lakes and wetlands and the long-term sustainability of our grasslands and natural environment.”

## VISION

Natural habitats across Manitoba landscapes and watersheds are supported in ways that preserve and support healthy ecosystems, biodiversity and community well-being.

## MANDATE

The conservation, restoration and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat and populations throughout Manitoba, for the benefit of all Manitobans.

## Conservation Agreements - Explained

MHHC’s primary tool for long-term habitat conservation is the Conservation Agreement (CA). Essentially an easement, a CA enables MHHC to enter into an agreement with a landowner for the purpose of protecting the habitat without affecting the parcel’s other land uses or ownership. The agreement is

perpetual and recorded on the land title, remaining in force even if the land changes hands. Most areas that have a CA may continue to be used for agricultural activities such as haying and grazing as long as the natural values are protected.

# \$38 MILLION

The annual value of goods and services provided to Manitobans by natural habitats conserved by MHHC, including such things as nutrient capture and flood control.

# 137,258 ACRES

The area of natural habitats permanently conserved by MHHC is equivalent to the size of Winnipeg and Brandon combined.

# 18,345 ACRES

Manitobans have donated lands or perpetual conservation agreements to MHHC that when combined, would be more than twice the size of Birds Hill Provincial Park.

Table 1: Total accomplishments by MHHC

	Prior to 2013/14	In 2013/14	Total
Acquired Properties	12,456	1,006	13,462
Perpetual Conservation Agreements	117,191	6,605	123,796
Term Conservation Contracts*	139,847	857	140,704
<b>Total</b>	<b>269,494</b>	<b>8,468</b>	<b>277,962</b>

\* Include both current and expired contracts

Shades of Cold, Scott Kroeker



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The Honourable Gord Mackintosh  
Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship  
Rm 330 Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

September 25, 2014

Dear Minister:

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2013/14 Annual Report and audited Financial Statements for The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation. The reporting periods for these are April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 through March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014.

Sincerest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Whitaker".

John Whitaker  
Chair

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

OVERVIEW **1**  
MESSAGES FROM THE CHAIR  
AND CEO **6**  
WATERSHEDS **7**  
WETLANDS **12**  
SPECIES AT RISK **20**  
HABITAT VALUES **27**  
MHHC 2013/14 PARTNERS **31**  
BOARD MEMBERS **32**

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation is working to fulfill its habitat conservation, restoration and enhancement objectives in Manitoba that have been set within a five year strategic plan framework. The sections of this annual report highlight activities conducted under each of the core "Habitat Strategies" outlined in the plan.

Homegrown conservation since 1986.

# MESSAGES FROM THE CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation was setup to work with Manitoba landowners for the benefit of all Manitobans and the province's fish and wildlife. MHHHC has been fulfilling this mandate for more than 25 years and this year has permanently conserved almost 8,500 acres of habitat. Through the work of MHHHC, future Manitoba residents and landowners can be assured that natural habitat will remain a part of our landscape.

Since 1986, over 137,000 acres of habitat have been enrolled in permanent protection by the most important stewards of the land—agricultural producers and individual landowners. These actions of more than 1,000 landowners provide a gift to future generations; a gift valued at an estimated \$38 million in ecological goods and services annually. On behalf of the MHHHC Board of Directors, I want to send a "Thank-you" to all conservation partners and participants and assure all Manitobans that MHHHC will continue to honour and respect these individual actions that have continuing societal benefits.



*Pictured above: John Whittaker, Chair, MHHHC (left) and Tim Sopuck, CEO, MHHHC (right)*

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MHHHC's fiscal year began with a convergence of program funding that created significant - some said impossible! - delivery expectations for wetlands and for species at risk habitat conservation. Much of this funding needed to be delivered, or at least committed, to projects before fiscal year end.

Layered over that opportunity is the reality that agriculture land prices have experienced a 2.5 fold increase in the last few years. So, it's of no surprise that interest in making formal commitments to conservation agreements has lagged of late.

It is a testament to the capability of MHHHC staff and the conservation ethic of Manitoba landowners that the Corporation exceeded its ambitious conservation objectives this year. While the acreage of completed projects increased significantly over the previous year, the inventory of conservation commitments for the coming year is also the largest, by far, in MHHHC corporate history.

On top of that, MHHHC took on new conservation enterprises ranging from learning the art of satellite-based wetland mapping, to supporting innovative conservation auction and ecological goods and services pilot projects. Today, MHHHC staff range from seasoned veterans with decades of conservation delivery experience to newcomers that are putting their specialized education to new uses in the field. It is a privilege to watch it all unfold.



*Flooded Blues, Scott Kroeker*

**It has been said that every land use decision is a water choice.**

In other words, the health of a given watershed is a measure of peoples' collective footprint from the land use activities and decisions that occur within it. MHHHC is working with landowners to make positive land use decisions that result in the maintenance and improvement of watershed health.



## LOCAL LEADERS – LOCAL IMPACT

Conservation districts (CDs) are community-led organizations that work with local stakeholders to develop and deliver programs that identify and address local watershed issues. CDs have detailed knowledge of local landscapes and have cultivated positive relationships with local landowners. This makes CDs key to the protection and enhancement of water quality and biodiversity in Manitoba’s rural landscape.

Combine this capacity with MHHC’s experience in conservation program delivery, and the result is a natural partnership. MHHC’s collaboration with the East Interlake Conservation District (EICD) is one of eight such partnerships to date. The EICD, due to its proximity to Lake Winnipeg, is in a unique position to influence actions that have a direct and immediate impact on the lake’s health, which brings even greater significance to efforts made in this district.

MHHC participates in a diverse suite of programs that support shared goals for healthy watersheds in Manitoba’s East Interlake region. This work ranges from the traditional conservation agreement partnerships, to the delivery of conservation programs through innovative “conservation auctions” (see pg. 29 for more on conservation auctions).

MHHC is also working with the EICD in the delivery of their watershed management plans. This includes extension programs that work with school-age kids to provide hands-on educational experiences that nurture a lasting environmental ethic among younger watershed residents, native prairie restorations, and conservation of natural habitats. MHHC and the EICD have developed a working partnership that by building on each other’s strengths, is delivering real results in the improvement of local watershed health and the health of Lake Winnipeg.



*Scheirlinck Conservation Agreement, MHHC*

**Table 2: Conservation Delivery with Conservation Districts**

Conservation District	Prior to 2013/14		In 2013/14		Total	
	CAs	Acres	CAs	Acres	CAs	Acres
East Interlake	8	371	-	-	8	371
La Salle Redboine	2	104	4	702	6	806
Pembina Valley	2	172	1	98	3	270
Seine Rat River	1	47	-	-	1	47
Swan Lake Watershed	2	217	-	-	2	217
Turtle Mountain	21	3,559	1	158	22	3,717
Upper Assiniboine River	1	80	-	-	1	80
Whitemud Watershed	17	10,697	1	20	18	10,717
<b>Total</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>15,247</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>978</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>16,225</b>

## KEEPING THE TREES...AND THE PEOPLE

By offering conservation options to private landowners, MHHC, in a small way, is enabling a young family to thrive in a rural area. Tyler and Tara Scheirlinck have volunteered to permanently protect 90 acres (36 ha) of habitat that they own in the Turtle Mountain area. This purchased conservation agreement keeps trees and permanent cover in an area where land continues to be cleared and drained, despite its high risk of erosion. The wetlands that it protects slow water from spring melt, which reduces downstream flooding, and the riparian zones filter the water before it flows into the streams that lead to Whitewater Lake—an internationally significant area for birds. This parcel also provides rich habitat for wildlife, including bobolinks, which is a bird species at risk. From the standpoint of biodiversity and watershed health, the value is enormous.

However, the feature of the land that provides the most value is that it is where the Scheirlincks have put down roots and are making their living. They produce sheep and honey, and are slowly expanding their operation. Supporting small-scale family farms is essential for the sustainability of rural landscapes. Families who live where they farm are more mindful of the landscape around them as this is the same land that grows the food that feeds their family. For the Scheirlincks, the natural aspect of the Turtle Mountains is also part of this lifestyle, so rest assured that, even without the conservation agreement, the forest, grassland, riparian areas and wetlands are in caring hands for years to come. The conservation agreement simply offers the Scheirlincks insurance that this habitat will remain even after they are gone.



Riparian workshop, MHHC



Beachell Wetland Restoration, MHHC

## GREEN BANKS CLEAR WATERS



The Green Banks Clear Waters project is a comprehensive initiative that builds community-level competency to identify and address local watershed issues. Working in partnership with four conservation districts in 2013/14, MHHC has enabled communities to evaluate their own watersheds by providing vegetation maps of four waterways. As well, working with audiences ranging from elementary school students to livestock industry personnel, an increased knowledge and awareness of these areas has reached 639 participants through a series of 13 workshops. On the ground, 14 riparian enhancement projects were completed, affecting 1,000 m of stream bank and 106 acres (43 ha) of land within the project area. Now complete, this three year project was made possible by the financial support of RBC Royal Bank through the RBC Blue Water Project funding.

## PHOSPHORUS, PONDS AND PUDDLE DUCKS

Wetland restoration delivery in Manitoba is not new, but it has always been challenging. Recent wet years have left people wanting water off their lands, not keeping it, but old challenges can be tackled with new ideas. Starting this year, MHHC demonstrated its program flexibility and adaptability by offering new 10-year wetland restoration contracts in addition to perpetual terms. With funding support from Environment Canada enabling this new range of term options, MHHC is engaging new landowners with its conservation programs and putting wetlands back on the land.

phosphorus in one year (10 kg/ha/yr). That means that in as little as five years, just 1,000 acres of restored wetlands will capture the equivalent of a semi-trailer load of algae-causing phosphorus that would otherwise enter Manitoba's lakes and rivers.

The benefits of wetland restorations are many. Bringing back these habitats restores the landscape's ability to work as an integrated system. In addition to providing new habitat for Manitoba's wildlife, restored wetlands are great at holding on to nutrients, carbon, sediment and other tag-alongs that come with the water running off fields, through our waterways, and into our lakes.

By using a restored wetland's knack for cleaning water, MHHC and its project partner Ducks Unlimited Canada were able to obtain \$720,000 in funding from the Lake Winnipeg Basin Stewardship Fund. This award was the single largest ever granted from the Fund, which was designed to support projects that can demonstrate nutrient capture within the Lake Winnipeg watershed.

Not only will this new restoration initiative help limit nutrient loading, but new waterfowl modelling is proving that restoring wetlands in the Prairie Pothole Region is one of the most effective ways to increase duck populations. For MHHC, this presents a major co-benefit as the Corporation continues to work with local landowners and partners across North America to improve waterfowl populations.

"Conserving our wetlands and prairies is of vital importance to biodiversity here in Manitoba", commented former federal Minister of Public Safety, the Honourable Vic Toews at a funding announcement for MHHC. "This investment in our natural environment supports the strong connection that all prairie communities have in ensuring the health of our lakes and wetlands and the long-term sustainability of our natural environment."

"This funding gives us a tremendous opportunity to work cooperatively with farmers and other private landowners to conserve and restore wetlands," said John Whitaker, Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation Chair.

Studies have shown that a single 2.5 acre restored wetland will capture as much as 22 pounds of

This new initiative is conservation programming at its best. It is bringing together new and old partners, engaging landowners, and improving overall watershed health for the benefit of all its residents—animals and people alike.



Left to Right: MP Lawrence Toet, Honourable Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety), John Whitaker (MHHC), Marilyn Latta (Nature Manitoba), Bob Grant (Ducks Unlimited Canada), MP Robert Sopuck

MHHC



# WETLANDS

Evening Light, Scott Kroeker

## Wetlands are a critical component of healthy landscape systems.

They perform many important functions: filtering water, storing carbon, and supporting biodiversity and Manitobans are starting to realize their enormous water storage role. These values are increasingly being recognized as wetland losses continue.

MHHC and its partners are committed to slow down, and eventually stop, the ongoing loss of wetlands by preserving those that still exist and restoring others that were drained in the past.

## REACHING ACROSS BORDERS



2014 Duck Stamp, Wisconsin DNR

Waterfowl have never recognized political boundaries, only habitat needs. While Canada provides ample breeding opportunities for waterfowl, in winter, waterfowl need to move to warmer climates. This connection between Canada and the United States has been recognized within the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) and by its partners, including individual U.S. states that are investing in wetland conservation in Canada.

Wisconsin is one of the Corporation's American partners that recognize by supporting habitat conservation in Canada, its residents will see a benefit; therefore, it has legislated that one-third of its Duck Stamp revenues must go into the "development of waterfowl propagation areas within Canada which will provide waterfowl for this State and the Mississippi flyway." Starting in 1978 at a cost of \$3.25 per stamp,

they now sell for \$7.00 and have raised approximately \$15 million (USD) for waterfowl conservation through purchases by hunters and bird enthusiasts.

In 2013/14, MHHC received \$30,000 in funding from Wisconsin via a funding application by its partner, the Delta Waterfowl Foundation. These funds are earmarked to permanently protect 247 acres (100 ha) of wetland and associated upland habitat in Manitoba.



Autumn Fly-by, Jeff Dyck



# WILDLIFE HABITAT CANADA

Since 1985, Wildlife Habitat Canada, a national, non-profit, charitable conservation organization, has invested over \$50 million to support hundreds of conservation projects on private and public lands across Canada, through its granting program. Wildlife Habitat Canada works through partnerships with communities, landowners, governments, nongovernment organizations, and industry to conserve, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat. To learn more about the projects that Wildlife Habitat Canada has funded or to see our annual report, please visit [www.whc.org](http://www.whc.org).

Without habitat...there is no wildlife. It's that simple!

**22,549  
ACRES**  
the amount of habitat  
conserved, restored  
or enhanced through  
WHC funding



## HUNTING FOR CONSERVATION

Now in its 30th year of supporting waterfowl conservation efforts, Wildlife Habitat Canada has invested over \$50 million in wildlife habitat conservation from the Atlantic to the Pacific, including the prairie ponds in between.

MHHC's first successful application to WHC was in 1996 when the Corporation received \$40,000 for a riparian stewardship initiative known as Green Banks. Since that time, MHHC has been successful in receiving support for projects ranging from wetland restorations to the installation of artificial waterfowl nests.

WHC's Executive Director, Cameron Mack noted, "WHC needs organizations like MHHC to work with local stakeholders and deliver good conservation projects on-the-ground." Together, MHHC and WHC have been able to achieve excellent results.

Leveraging WHC contributions 6-to-1, a total investment of \$5.4 million has been made in Manitoba's habitats through WHC projects. This support has permanently conserved 21,167 acres of existing wetlands, restored 532 acres of formerly drained wetlands and improved the waterfowl production potential on another 850 acres of wetland habitat.

The majority of the revenues received by WHC are sourced from waterfowl hunters in Canada. Commenting on this,

Mack noted, "Waterfowl hunters have a long and proud history of wildlife and habitat conservation in Canada and North America. They are generally very supportive of the Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp because they know they are contributing directly to on-the-ground habitat conservation and stewardship efforts."

Reflecting on WHC's long-term success in conservation, Mack said, "WHC was, in many ways, ahead of the curve when it was created 30 years ago. It recognized that habitat conservation and restoration was the fundamental tool to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem integrity at a time when most agencies were still focussed on individual species and population management." And looking forward to the next 30 years, "WHC will continue to invest in local stewardship projects that help us to meet national and international habitat conservation efforts, such as the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and continue working with partners to increase waterfowl hunting participation. This will, in turn, increase the funding available for wildlife conservation efforts and help to connect people more closely with the natural world."



## WINNIPEG ARTIST FLIES HIGH ON THE WINGS OF CINNAMON TEAL



Lori Boast with Sun Kissed Cinnamon, MHHC

The painting "Sun Kissed Cinnamon" by Winnipeg wildlife artist, Lori Boast, was the winning entry in Wildlife Habitat Canada's annual art competition and appears on the 2014 Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp. Lori's work will help generate funds to support conservation programming through the purchase of these stamps by hunters, a requirement to validate their migratory bird hunting permits. As well, collectors purchase stamps and prints of the painting, which generates additional revenue.

Lori is no stranger to wildlife art competitions, but this was the first time she entered the WHC Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp competition. Lori likes the structure of these kinds of contests. It forces her to focus more on audience—painting for someone—and deadlines have enabled her to become more efficient. She now pays more attention to the details of the landscape, like how the light plays on the vegetation and the tiny plants that cover the water. "It is a lot of work, but having your piece selected is the validation that makes it all worth it."

Lori also recognizes the benefits of these competitions. "These types of programs help wildlife and conserve nature by raising funds, but they have much further reaching effects than that. Every artist who paints an image must do research. They share their learning and enthusiasm, win or lose, spreading the knowledge and appreciation for nature. This, too, is conservation".

Lori has enjoyed the opportunity to meet others who share her love of nature and art. Her advice for budding wildlife artists: "follow the rules explicitly so your amazing piece isn't disqualified; don't be afraid to try something new; and keep at it!"

Stamps and prints are available at Rousseau Collections ([www.rousseaucollections.com](http://www.rousseaucollections.com)). To see more of Lori's work, please visit [www.loriboast.com](http://www.loriboast.com).



# DELTA – A MANITOBA TRADITION

*Canvasback, Delta Waterfowl/Fred Greenslade*

With a 100 year legacy, the Delta Waterfowl Foundation has a long-established tradition of waterfowl conservation and research. Early on it established a base in Manitoba at Delta Marsh, and has since expanded its reach to hunters and conservationists across North America. Throughout the decades, Delta has achieved this success by staying true to its roots, as a hunter-based organization with a vision of preserving waterfowl populations through research, habitat conservation, and duck production. This mandate can be traced back to James Ford Bell, founder of General Mills and father of Delta, who envisioned a goal of replacing three ducks for every one harvested on his Delta Marsh property.

Although Delta has members across North America, it has never left its birthplace, and maintains its Canadian headquarters in Manitoba. Joel Brice, Vice-President of Conservation and Hunter Recruitment, reflected on this, “Manitoba is where Delta’s roots are; the organization was formed here and great research and conservation work continues to be done in Manitoba. Delta has no plans to move from its ‘home’”.

In the 1990s MHHC and Delta partnered for the first time on the delivery of term leases on wetland and upland habitat. After this initial success, in 1998, it made sense to expand the partnership to include perpetual conservation agreements. Brice stated, “First and foremost, MHHC and Delta share a passion for the waterfowl resource. By working together, each organization can bring their strengths in supporting this resource, MHHC in its easement delivery and Delta in its ability to bring U.S. funding to the targeted and focussed programming being delivered in Canada.”

While the MHHC-Delta partnership has remained consistent, the type of programming undertaken by Delta and MHHC has evolved based on the latest waterfowl research, current waterfowl needs, and agricultural trends. One simple program that has developed to improve duck production, and landowner engagement, is the Hen House program.

“Research by Delta students has shown that success for mallards nesting on the ground over the past four years in the Minnedosa area has averaged just two per cent,” says Matt Chouinard, a Delta Waterfowl Biologist, “and even though a



mallard hen will begin a new nest if she loses her first, the chances of success are no better the second time around.” One solution to this production problem is to create safer nesting locations called Hen Houses—places where skunks, racoons and other mammals have a hard time reaching.

Hen Houses are tube-like structures, comprised of flax straw sandwiched between two layers of welded wire fencing. The structures are fastened to an eight-foot metal pole and driven into the muddy bottom of a marsh. “The success of nesting tunnels, depending on the area, can be as high as 80 per cent, but a study conducted in the early 2000s found the average success rate to be about 60 per cent,” Chouinard says. “While that might seem a little low, when you compare that to the two per cent success rate on the ground, that is pretty impressive.”

Combined, MHHC and Delta have installed about 3,000 of these structures, mainly in the Minnedosa region, and while these structures are producing about 5,600 mallards each year, the program is also allowing MHHC staff to meet with new landowners. MHHC’s longest serving field representative, Roy Bullion, noted that “It’s old hat now. People see the structures all over and they know what the program is all about. We have never been refused.” And while completing the 10-year agreement associated with the Hen House installation, Roy and other MHHC Habitat Conservation Specialists have an opportunity to discuss other conservation program options like wetland restoration or habitat conservation.

Since November 1, 1999, when the first U.S.-funded conservation agreement was registered, MHHC and Delta have been working together to keep habitat on the land. Since then, over \$5.1 million dollars has been provided to landowners for the long-term protection of 52,000 acres (21,000 ha) of wetland and upland habitat. The partnership is not over. MHHC and Delta continue to seek new and innovative ways to work together and ensure the sustainability of the waterfowl populations in North America, and perhaps achieve that early goal established by James Ford Bell, and put three ducks back for every one taken.



*Ducklings hatched in a Hen House, Delta Waterfowl/Fred Greenslade*



Aerial View of a Fen, MHHHC

## NORTH AMERICAN WATERFOWL MANAGEMENT ACTION

### Manitoba Implementation Plan

In 2006, conservation groups in Manitoba partnered to develop 25-year conservation objectives with the goal of increasing waterfowl populations in Manitoba and North America. Once 25-year objectives were established, a 5-year strategy for North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) program delivery in Manitoba was developed. Many successes and challenges were faced by the partners but building from that experience, a new implementation plan for 2013-2020 is in development. MHHHC is once again coordinating this effort in Manitoba.

Although most waterfowl populations are currently exceeding long-term averages, much of this is the result optimal (but temporary) weather conditions experienced in the last number of years. However, underlying these conditions was five years of waterfowl conservation delivery where significant progress was made towards the achievement of NAWMP objectives for Manitoba.

Over the 2007-2012 planning period, the Manitoba NAWMP partnership influenced over 255,000 acres (103,000 ha) of wetland and upland habitat in Manitoba. This is an area

twice the size of Winnipeg. This work included permanent and term restoration activities occurring on 100,000 acres (40,500 ha) of upland and wetland habitat, and the permanent protection of 155,000 acres (62,500 ha) of existing upland and wetland habitats.

When the range of NAWMP partner activities are measured, the partnership in Manitoba exceeded its five year habitat objective by five per cent. Manitoba conservation delivery organizations have made a real difference to waterfowl through their work. Commenting on the success of the partners, Stephen Carlyle, Chair of the Manitoba NAWMP Partnership said that, "part of the process of developing a new implementation plan for the Prairies is to build models to show the impact of our work. These draft models are showing that conservation delivery across the Prairie Provinces resulted in almost 30,000 extra nests being hatched in 2011." Nests that otherwise would not have been there. "Thirty thousand extra nests across the Prairies, a quarter million acres influenced in Manitoba, these are significant accomplishments achieved by the NAWMP partners."

## SPACE: MHHC'S NEW FRONTIER

MHHC is taking a new perspective on wetlands. This time it is from the lens of a new satellite flying 705 kilometres above the earth.

Mapping wetlands has always been a challenge. If it isn't the mosquitoes, floating mats of vegetation, hip-deep (or deeper!) water or the dense shrubs, it is the sheer size and remoteness of this habitat that makes it impossible to extensively survey from the ground. The solution is to replace most of the field work with a few highly-trained and motivated people and provide them some high-tech mapping tools.

Mapping wetlands from space requires specialised software that can begin to group areas of an image that look similar, akin to the way a person naturally groups parts of a picture even if the colour isn't uniform. Once these clusters of similar-looking pixels are grouped, a user like Gabrielle Leo (Wetland Inventory Specialist, MHHC), can take a portion of these and "teach" the computer what type of habitat it has spotted. Once the computer has been "trained" it can then classify the other clusters across the image based on samples that Gabrielle's colleague, Dylan Bart (Program Delivery Support Technician, MHHC) has provided.

While easy enough in concept, the vast area of coverage and strict adherence to quality control standards makes the generation of a final product very challenging and time consuming. "We have been tasked with the monumental job of mapping an area larger than the entire country of Denmark", noted Gabrielle, "and this still leaves 93% of Manitoba unmapped". Fortunately, MHHC is collaborating with other Canadian Wetland Inventory partners who are mapping different parts of Manitoba and together, wetland maps of Manitoba are being produced.

This initiative is part of a larger strategy that the Province of Manitoba is implementing. The work MHHC is doing on the wetland inventory will provide core information to Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship and support all three pillars of Manitoba's new Surface Water Management Strategy.

By working with the province, MHHC is exploring new horizons and creating wetland maps of Manitoba. Because once we know what is out there, all Manitobans can work to conserve these natural treasures that abound.

### Manitoba NAWMP Implementation Plan Partners:

- Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation
- Agriculture, Agri-food Canada
- Bird Studies Canada
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Environment Canada
- Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
- Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
- Nature Conservancy Canada

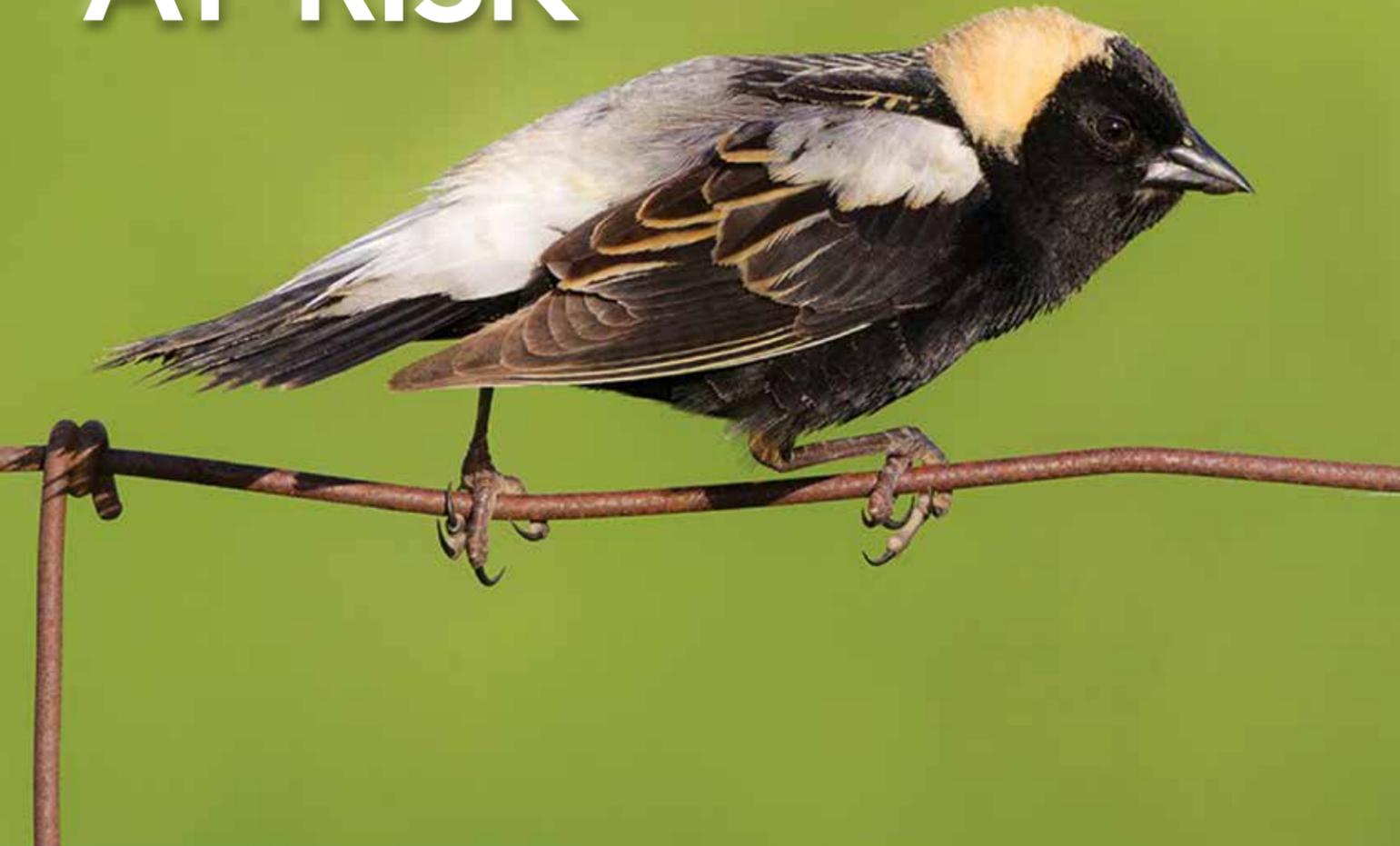
**Activity for 2013/14:**  
MHHC – 7,612 acres (3,080 ha)

*North American Waterfowl Management Plan*



**prairie habitat**  
*joint venture*

# SPECIES AT RISK



Bobolink, Jeff Dyck

## Species at risk are particularly sensitive to changes in their environment.

Many thrive only in very specific soil, vegetation or aquatic conditions. In particular, native mixed-grass and tall-grass prairie grasslands are home to a large percentage of Manitoba's unique, rare or endangered species of plants, birds, insects, and other animals. Careful management of these habitats is critical to the long-term survival of these vulnerable species.

The good news is that lands where these special species occur are already being managed in a way that supports them. The land use for the majority of native grasslands in Manitoba is cattle grazing. This makes cattle producers important partners for conserving species at risk. MHHC is working with these and other livestock producers to permanently protect native prairie grasslands and to ensure that land uses promote healthy prairie ecosystems and sustain species at risk.

## PROTECTING THE ENDANGERED

In 2013/14, MHHC conserved 3,043 acres (1,231 ha) of habitat for species at risk with conservation agreements with payments totalling \$446,153 and received a land donation of 323 acres. Overall, MHHC has signed up 51,095 acres (20,677 ha) of species at risk habitat over the past fourteen years and paid over \$4.05 million to Manitoba landowners for the right to conserve these habitats.



Burrowing Owl, MHHC

## MANAGING HABITAT FOR SPECIES AT RISK

In addition to its permanent conservation program, MHHC also receives funds for the management of species at risk habitat through the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk. Management activities are carried out by the MHHC, and in partnership with CWWP. These include shrub mowing and prescribed burns that limit the growth of woody vegetation and retain open prairie. This year, 1,388 acres (562 ha) of native prairie grasslands were mowed by MHHC to allow more grassland species to flourish in these areas.

### MHHC conserved habitats for the following species at risk this year

**BAIRD'S SPARROW** **BIGMOUTH SHINER** **BOBOLINK** **BUFFALO GRASS** **BURROWING OWL** **CHESTNUT COLLARED LONGSPUR** **COMMON NIGHT HAWK** **DAKOTA SKIPPER** **FERRUGINOUS HAWK** **GREAT PLAINS TOAD** **LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE** **PRAIRIE SKINK** **SILVER CHUB** **SPRAGUE'S PIPIT** **WESTERN SPIDERWORT**



Rex Conservation Agreement, MHC

## A PROMISE TO THE LAND

When Sandra and Will Rex came together as partners, one of the many commitments they made was to conserve and care for a majestic 256 acre (104 ha) piece of habitat. Their property is characterized by sandy prairie meadows interspersed with groves of aspen, oak and spruce. The gently sloping land descends towards the Cypress River, where it is met by the Bill Ruddell Creek. It is home to turtles, frogs, butterflies, red-tail hawks, coyotes, foxes, deer, elk, and the endangered prairie skink.

The land is also used for cattle pasture, but it is clear that it means much, much more than an income source to the Rexes. As they speak about the land, they do so with the same respect and affection that they would show towards a beloved member of the family. Sandra reflected on the family's desire to keep the land as they have cared for it. "I didn't know how that commitment would play out. All I knew was that somehow this has to be here for future generations – to love and to have their breath taken away like it takes away ours every time."

It is also clear that this land is in capable hands. Under his rotational grazing regime, Will has noticed many new oak seedlings popping up, "Evidently, the way I am grazing is good for them. They're there." He predicts that in 60 years, the valley will have a healthy stand of oak trees, but he doesn't know who will own it then. To ensure that it is protected, the Rexes chose to place this land under a perpetual conservation agreement (CA), or easement. With a CA, land use practices that maintain the ecological integrity of the habitat are permitted. Since the CA is placed on the land title, the future landowners are also bound by the agreement. The agreement is voluntary and the landowners receive a one-time payment.

While hosting the MHC Board of Directors on their property, Sandra stated, "It doesn't matter if you live in the city, or at our place, it is our job to care for it in a way that can be sustained; in a way that oak trees can come back. We are incredibly grateful waking up to this every morning. Thank you for helping us."

# LEAVING A LEGACY

Not every landowner has the same situation, or preference, when it comes to dealing with wildlife habitat on his or her property. This important decision has an impact now and for generations to come. This is why MHC offers a range of options to suit landowners' diverse interests and needs. Occasionally, some landowners wish to donate their land to MHC outright.

The late Dr. Doreen Moggey, the late Mr. Raymond Ray, and Mr. Frank Crew all chose to leave a legacy for wildlife and habitat conservation in Manitoba.

Dr. Moggey lived on the shores of Pelican Lake while practicing medicine in the area. Living on the shore of the lake, Dr. Moggey bore witness to its seasonal and annual changes. What she didn't want to see changed was her 35 acres (14 ha) of habitat. Seeking to preserve this, she donated a conservation agreement with MHC but this wasn't enough. She then entered into a "Life Interest/Remaining Interest" agreement with MHC. With this type of donation, MHC and Dr. Moggey jointly held title to the land until the time of her passing, at which point MHC became the sole owner. Upon her passing in 2013, her wish to have the land owned and preserved by MHC was fulfilled.

Mr. Raymond Ray lived on a half-section of land off Highway 2 near Pipestone Manitoba. Beginning in 2006, Mr. Ray had discussions with MHC about donating

this property to the Corporation. Mr. Ray chose to bequeath his property to MHC as part of his last will and testament. Nestled in the heart of habitat for species at risk, these 323 acres (131 ha) of native prairie will now forever be managed for their benefit. Within five miles of the property, nine different grassland bird species listed as "threatened" or "endangered" have been found.

The final land donation received by MHC in 2013/14 was from Mr. Frank Crew. Mr. Crew lives and has farmed in the Birdtail River Valley. When farming, he understood the need to cultivate land and produce food, but not at the cost of all else. As a long-time member of the local game and fish chapter, Mr. Crew recognizes the need to preserve lands for wildlife. When selling his operation in 2013, Mr. Crew decided to retain 400 acres (462 ha) of valley side-slope and some cultivated areas and through a fee-simple donation, give this land to MHC. Now retired from farming, Mr. Crew has the satisfaction of knowing that these important habitats will remain.

Dr. Moggey, Mr. Ray and Mr. Crew all chose to donate lands to MHC. Each had their own reasons, and each took a different donation route, but they all have one thing in common. They loved the land that they owned, took care of it, and wanted to see it protected and managed as they did.



Deer Silhouettes, Jeff Dyck

## 3 WAYS TO DONATE LANDS TO MHC

- **Life interest/Remaining interest**  
*Joint title until one's passing upon which sole ownership is automatically transferred*
- **Bequeathment**  
*Transfers ownership through the estate*
- **Fee simple donation**  
*Immediate transfer of ownership*



Greater Yellowlegs in Habitat, Jeff Dyck

## MANAGING THE 0.01%

Manitoba's remaining tall-grass prairie is the most critically endangered habitat in Manitoba. At a fraction of 1%, the remnants of this once vast habitat need to be preserved and managed with great care. MHHC is part of a management committee that is doing just that. With support from Environment Canada and other funding sources, habitat monitoring, management and education occurs annually in the Manitoba Tall-grass Prairie Preserve by preserve partners.

The management group is comprised of representatives from four organizations that fund, own land and/or conduct activities in

the area. Working with the Critical Wildlife Habitat Program and Conservation and Water Stewardship, MHHC participates in the coordination and review of species at risk work in the preserve.

The public is encouraged to experience some of the last remaining tall-grass prairie in Manitoba by visiting Nature Conservancy Canada's new interpretive centre, walking along the Agassiz Interpretive Trail, or the Prairie Shore Trail located on MHHC lands (3km east of Tolstoi, MB on PR209).

### Native Prairie Stewardship

The Critical Wildlife Habitat Program (CWHP) is a partnership initiative with The Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation, led by Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship - Wildlife Branch. Other agencies participate on a project specific basis. The CWHP goal is to identify, conserve and manage remaining native grassland habitats in Manitoba, especially habitats of unique, rare and endangered species.

### Mixed-grass Prairie Habitat Stewardship

The Mixed-grass Prairie Habitat Stewardship Project works with livestock producers to implement sustainable prairie management prescriptions on private lands in southwestern Manitoba. This initiative serves to improve the quality of remaining native prairie, increase income to producers and ultimately leads to the long-term retention of native prairie grasslands which support biodiversity.

In 2013/14 the project secured 857 acres (347 ha) of native grassland on privately owned lands under three, 5-year twice-over grazing management agreements. A total of 778 acres (315 ha) of shrubs were mowed and 147 acres (59 ha) were managed through prescribed burning. Project extension activities, including a prairie management tour and a 3-day workshop, highlighted the importance of the mixed-grass prairie ecosystem to livestock producers and species at risk. Interviews with project co-operators were conducted, with results showing that, by working with private landowners to implement sustainable prairie management practices, native prairie grasslands are conserved.

The Mixed-grass Prairie Habitat Stewardship Project inventoried 4,012 acres (1,624 ha) of grassland in 2013/14, bringing the total area included in the Mixed-grass Prairie Inventory to 196,446 acres (79,499 ha). Inventory information on mixed-grass prairie grasslands is used to guide future stewardship activities in southwestern Manitoba. These inventories identify new areas and recommend sites where sustainable management or permanent protection should be implemented to benefit species at risk. An initial assessment of un-surveyed mixed-grass prairie lands was also completed in 2013/14 to target future survey efforts in the Rural Municipalities of Wallace, Miniota and Woodworth.

Monitoring work to assess land management impacts on species at risk was conducted and a four year study on shrub mowing on mixed-grass prairie was completed in 2013. This study showed that obligate grassland birds were more abundant on mowed plots versus control plots and facultative grassland birds were more abundant.



Tall-grass prairie, MHHC

## Tall-grass Prairie Habitat Stewardship

The Manitoba Tall Grass Prairie Preserve (Preserve) of southeastern Manitoba is the largest intact natural tall-grass community in the province and contains several endangered and threatened species. The CWHP works in a multi-agency partnership to develop an annual work program that focusses management efforts for the area. The goal of this project is to ensure that the management done at the Preserve is effective in maintaining ecosystem viability and that the monitoring program is tracking the impacts of all major local and landscape-scale threats to species at risk. Long-term monitoring at the Preserve has shown decreases in the numbers of obligate grassland birds with increases in facultative and non-grassland birds. The research has also shown a habitat structural change from dry upland prairie to more areas of sedge meadow and increases in aspen.

As part of the Tall Grass Prairie Habitat Stewardship Project, detailed vegetation reclassifications and species at risk surveys were conducted on six Preserve properties, totalling 880 acres

(356 ha). Species at risk monitoring for small white lady's-slippers, western prairie fringed-orchids, Riddell's goldenrod, western silvery aster, Great Plains ladies'-tresses, Culver's root and other rare plants continued on Preserve lands and road allowances in 2013/14. CWHP species at risk data collected at the Preserve is made available to the Manitoba Conservation Data Centre, Preserve partners and the Rural Municipality of Stuartburn to guide the implementation of management and maintenance activities.

Invasive species control efforts under this project removed leafy spurge and St. John's wort from 22 acres (9 ha) and aspen from 7.4 acres (3 ha) to limit encroachment on tall-grass prairie lands and conserve species at risk habitat.

Project extension activities included a classroom presentation and a school tour, the annual Prairie Day event which was attended by 95 people and production of two editions of "Prairie Ponders" which were distributed to local communities.



Shrub control, CWHP

# HABITAT VALUES



3 Frostketeers, Scott Kroeker

## "You don't know what you've got till it's gone."

The legendary Canadian songwriter, Joni Mitchell, put these words in the chorus of a song that became one of her most famous tunes. Whether referring to the biodiversity of Hawaii, as Mitchell is in this song, or Manitoba's wetlands or native grasslands, any conversion of natural lands comes at an ecological cost. Quantifying these costs, however, is a work in progress.

How do we fairly compensate private landowners who retain or enhance the ecological value of their lands? If a site must be developed, or if it has been destroyed due to an industrial accident, how many acres of habitat preserved or restored elsewhere will make up for the loss? MHC, along with other organizations, are working to understand the costs related to preserving habitat and where habitat destruction cannot be avoided, ensuring that compensation is adequate.

# MITIGATING A U.S. DISASTER

Covering an area the size of Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis combined, the British Petroleum Deep Water Horizon oil spill was one of the worst environmental disasters ever faced by the United States. Estimated to total 4.9 million barrels (780,000 m3), the oil that spilt into the Gulf of Mexico was equivalent to three months of oil production in Manitoba. Billions are being spent on the cleanup and the after-effects of the spill.

But this happened 2,500 km away, and what does that have to do with MHC?

As of February 2013, criminal and civil settlements, and payments to a trust fund had cost British Petroleum (BP) \$42.2 billion (USD). This included \$100 million (USD) to be used across North America for wetland restoration and conservation projects approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To be allocated over six years, these funds are to benefit migratory bird species, other wildlife and habitat

affected by the spill. By proposing conservation works that benefit migratory species using the Gulf of Mexico, Canadian organizations were eligible to access a portion of this money. In 2013/14, MHC was awarded \$250,000 (USD) of the BP fines to conserve and restore wetlands in Manitoba.

Bird species have long established migratory pathways between their breeding and wintering grounds. Given the location of the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian prairies, there exists a logical north-south link between the two areas. These links are generally referred to as "flyways". In its application for funding, MHC was able to demonstrate population links for 16 bird species that were either directly impacted or had their habitats impacted by the oil spill.

With these funds, MHC was able to secure 160 acres of wetland and upland habitat that will have direct benefits to spill-affected birds. Future restoration works will be completed to enhance this breeding habitat for these feathered fauna.



Haybales, Scott Kroeker

MHC CONSERVATION INTERESTS ANNUALLY PROVIDE **\$38 MILLION** IN ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES TO MANITOBA'S

Waterfowl	Waterbirds	Landbirds
American Wigeon	American Bittern	Le Conte's Sparrow
Canvasback	Black-crowned Night Heron	Marsh Wren
Lesser Scaup	Horned Grebe	Nelson's Sparrow
Mallard	Pied-billed Grebe	Sedge Wren
Northern Pintail	Yellow Rail	
Redhead		
Ring-necked Duck		



Pied-billed Grebe, Delta Waterfowl/Fred Greenslade

# CONSERVATION AUCTIONS – DISCOVERING THE COSTS OF PROVIDING ECOLOGICAL GOODS AND SERVICES

Healthy ecosystems deliver many services that benefit society. They reduce the impact of flooding, remove pollutants from water, protect soil from erosion and support pollinating insects that are essential for agricultural production, just to name a few. The conservation community collectively refers to these benefits as Ecological Goods and Services (EGS). Well managed private lands support healthy ecosystems, therefore private landowners are producers of EGS; and they do so while incurring some personal cost. These costs could be added time and fuel to cultivate around a wetland, or the extra fencing and maintenance required to protect a sensitive riparian zone. Society generally supports the idea of compensating landowners for providing EGS, but what does this payment look like? How much are these EGS actually worth and what are the actual costs to the landowner? How can society determine a fair payment while ensuring good value for taxpayer dollars?

A tool for discovering this value is a conservation auction. This is a form of a reverse auction where landowners are invited to place bids, or the dollar amount they are willing to accept, for providing EGS. The EGS could be provided through existing land management practices or through the adoption of a new beneficial management practice. The bids are then ranked and payments are awarded to projects that provide the best value for program dollars while staying within a fixed budget.

Currently, the conservation auction model as a mechanism for environmental program delivery is still in its infancy in Manitoba. As it represents a fundamentally new approach, research must still be conducted and kinks worked out. However, interest in the concept is growing as it diversifies conservation program options for Manitoba's landowners. The process also provides some insight into landowner expectations, which can then be applied to pre-existing program areas like conservation agreements.

In recent years, two conservation auctions have been conducted in Manitoba. The first was the Dennis Lake Conservation Auction in the East Interlake Conservation District. Being one of the first auctions held, the development of project selection criteria and assessment was a core deliverable of the project, one MHC helped complete. Further, MHC provided support for the development and delivery of conservation agreements on flooded and habitat lands in the watershed. This latter participation was also extended to the Turtle Mountain Conservation District with the delivery of their conservation auction in 2013/14. MHC is committed to continuing its work with conservation districts and supporting this alternative method of conservation program delivery in Manitoba.



*Repoll in the Snow, Jeff Dyck*

## MHHC 2013/14 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 Canada  
International Institute  
for Sustainable Development  
Keystone Agricultural Producers  
La Salle Redboine Conservation District  
Landowners  
Manitoba Agriculture  
Food and Rural Development  
Manitoba Beef Producers  
Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship

Manitoba Conservation Districts Association  
Manitoba Forestry Association  
Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation  
Manitoba Wildlife Federation  
Nature Manitoba  
Pembina Valley Conservation District  
Prairie Habitat Joint Venture  
Seine Rat River Conservation District  
State of Illinois  
State of Mississippi  
State of Wisconsin  
The Nature Conservancy of Canada  
Turtle Mountain Conservation District  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service  
Whitemud Watershed Conservation District  
Wildlife Habitat Canada

# BOARD MEMBERS

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John Whitaker (Chair)*	Citizen
Bruce Gray (Vice-Chair)*	Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship
Neil Christoffersen	Association of Manitoba Municipalities
Murray Dubowits*	Citizen
Jim Fisher	Delta Waterfowl Foundation
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Esther Salvano	Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Veronica Walsh	Citizen

## Ex Officio

Tom Teichroeb	Manitoba Beef Producers
Deanna Dixon	Prairie Habitat Joint Venture
Ute Holweger	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Kevin Teneycke	Nature Conservancy Canada

\* Executive Committee member

*A special recognition and thanks goes out to the dedicated individuals of the MHHC Board of Directors who retired their position in 2013/14. These engaged conservationists include, Glen Campbell of the Manitoba Beef producers and John Williams of the Manitoba Wildlife Federation, Habitat Trust.*



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