

# Three Rivers Trail Newsletter

(Arm River – Qu'Appelle River – South Saskatchewan River)

Three Rivers Trail Association (TRTA), Box 367, Craik, SK, S0G 0V0.

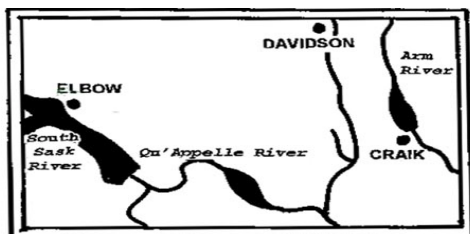
No.4, Summer 2004

## The TRTA Objectives:

- To promote the beauty of valley vistas, the prairie geography and the 'spirit' of the land;
- To give an understanding and appreciation of grassland ecology by identifying points of interests and associated trails in glacial pothole country, sand hills, wetlands, and old glacial valleys;
- To make maps showing birding trails and heritage sites; and
- To mark hiking and equestrian trails with metal posts showing the TRTA Logo (below):



## The TRTA Area:



## The TRTA Board of Directors:

Bob Doig, Chamberlain  
Lyle/Christine Benz, Aylesbury  
Sterling Schollar, Craik  
Doug McIvor, Girvin  
Don Wilkins, Girvin  
Gloria Kadlec, Bladworth  
Ed Spratt, Davidson (Chairman)  
Shirley Eade, Craik (Sec./Treasurer)

## Trail Ride Set for July 31, 2004

Another new trail route will be tried, this time around the 'Camp of Plenty' (the Farden Ranch, Arm River Valley, Davidson).

**Directions:** to get to Peter and Sheila Farden's farmyard: **Go east from the Davidson RaceTrac Gas Station 7 mi (11.3 km), turn north at the top of the Arm River Valley (east side) and go north until the road ends (1.5 mi).**

The Farden pasture takes in more than 2 miles of the Arm River Valley north & south, and encompasses 2 branch coulees east to west. Within those pastures is what Peter calls the 'Camp of Plenty', where our indigenous people have camped for thousands of years. There are teepee rings, dancing grounds, buffalo jumps, a fish weir, plenty of spring water and more.

**Come to the Farden Ranch by 10 AM, bring a trail lunch and by 4:30 PM TRTA should have a Bar B Q ready go (donation jar to cover cost).**

See you there! Happy trails!

## Exploring the Iskwao Creek; Davidson to the Qu'Appelle Valley:



Iskwao Creek at Schollar's Pasture, Craik. Picture the 'Living Sky' above this Valley!

Iskwao is a Cree word meaning 'woman', a mature woman, a sister, mother, aunt, etc. In the old days it was a very respectful word. The early English settlers had difficulty saying the word the way the Cree said it, so they invented the word 'squaw' and began calling native women this word, sometimes in a derogative way.

The Iskwao Valley was named after native women because the early prairie explorers found out that the native buffalo hunters and warriors used to leave their families camping in this 'safe' valley (watched over by Manitou) while they traveled. The South Saskatchewan River Valley was essentially the border between the Cree of the NE plains and the Lakota, Dakota, and Blackfoot of the SW; so the men were often away patrolling, sometimes cooperating in joint hunts, and sometimes in combat.

At the end of the last ice age, a large glacier lobe melted to leave the Allan Hills, and the melt water was channeled to the Qu'Appelle Valley through the Iskwao Creek and Arm River. Similarly, years earlier, the Qu'Appelle Valley was an ice margin drainage channel too. The Iskwao Creek today starts north of Davidson and runs more or less south not far from the third meridian (Lat. 105W). As Davidson became a larger town, a dam was built to supplement water supplies. For years there was a picnic grounds and swimming beach there, but unsupervised swimming lead to a few drowning deaths before it was closed to the public.

As the Iskwao valley winds its way south it gets quite rugged and deep (west of Girvin and Craik). There are no municipal roads across it due to the steep banks. There are thousands of acres of native grass pastures and numerous livestock watering dams, some spring fed even when the creek does not run. Pioneers can testify to the importance this area has been for livestock production and sustainability through various drought periods. Pioneer family names include Riecken, Schollar, Edwards, Sanden, Watkins, amongst others.

A few miles south of the Craik grid road the valley once again spreads out to become quite shallow before the Iskwao Creek joins the Qu'Appelle River just east of Eyebrow Lake.

\*\*\*\*\*

## May 23 Trail Ride a Success in Spite of Cold, Wind & Rain:

Sub-title: **The Trail Around Arm Lake**

On 23 May 2004 five wagon teamsters and 19 equestrians explored the new trail along the west side of Arm Lake to the Wilkins Wildlife Reserve. Wilkins' reserve is more than 160 acres at the north end of the lake that was native pasture when Don Wilkins set it aside and stopped grazing it more than 20 years ago. It was never cultivated but the grazing affected the vegetation enough that today it is not exactly like native prairie. Here, as the Arm River widens to become Arm Lake there are acres of shallow sedge and cattail wetlands, home to thousands of waterfowl. In the spring and fall the migratory waterfowl stop in the hundreds of thousands.

The TRTA trail starts at the Craik Regional Park gate, and if heading west, the trail proceeds along the south edge of the Craik Golf Course to the north-south road heading to McCaw's Cabin. Dr. McCaw built and maintained a cabin on an inlet of Arm Lake for last 20 years or more. It is about 4 km north of the Craik cemetery. No matter who owns the cabin in the future, it will likely keep the name "McCaw's Cabin". Across the lake from McCaw's (about 1 km) there is another inlet into Arm Lake. From a hill on the valley edge overlooking McCaw's there is view of the lake and 2 inlets on each side of the lake. Some dedicated 'Birders' with support of TRTA are building a viewing platform on that lookout. One local birder claims that he can go to that site on a nice summer evening and count more than 100 species of birds.

From McCaw's the trail goes west 1.6 km on the road before turning north again on an ungraded road which turns into a grassy trail with native aspens groves. There is a pleasant place to stop to rest (see photo). There is a 64 acre reclaimed gravel pit further north that has regrown with some willows and aspens in places, making it an excellent wildlife refuge for deer and upland grouse. Next, the trail enters Don Wilkin's pasture through a large TRTA gate donated by Verne Mittelholtz and installed by Don. The trail transverses Don's pasture for 1.6 km (north for a mile), going by a small dam and reservoir that Don constructed complete with islands to enhance waterfowl production.

Turn east a half mile and you are at the Wilkin's Reserve described at the beginning of this article. Our group of 25 equestrians (May 23) reached this beautiful site on a cold windy rainy day, so they did not stop long before turning back to Craik on the same west-side trail. On a beautiful summer day one would spend an hour or so exploring the prairie and going down to the lakeside, and watching birds. From the top of the hill one can look back to see a vista of the lake and the town of Craik, about 7 km to the south.

A trail from the Regional Park to Wilkin's Reserve on the east side of Arm Lake is also known. Thus, TRTA can officially say that there is a trail around Arm Lake. It is certainly open to hiking, and probably cross-country bikers. The 'catch' is that one has to cross the Arm River on the north end of Wilkin's property, meaning a 10 meter walk through one meter of slow moving water!

TRTA is talking of placing a bridge there good enough for an equestrian trail.



**Kerri and Brandy Bakken – 23 May**

## Announcements:

The Davidson Riding Club have Gymkhana Events scheduled for the summer, every 2 weeks, on Sundays, alternating between Davidson and Hanley. Phone Gloria Kadlec at 567-4295 for the schedule. There is a trail ride at Griffin's Ranch, Elbow, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July. Phone 854-4748 for details.

Check Trails End Guest Ranch (Aylesbury) web site for their equestrian events:

[www.guest-ranch.ca](http://www.guest-ranch.ca) or phone 1-866-885-0775. There is a trail ride along the Arm River scheduled for 11 Sept 04, starting at Trails End Ranch. Many TRTA members will attend.

The Birding Platform above McCaw's Cabin is now completed and useable – there is a little hike to get to it.

**[In addition to the 31 July Ride, TRTA is planning other trail rides and events and will announce them in the next NewsLetter.]**

## Sincere Thanks

Like all activities of TRTA, the Ride on 23 May 2004 would not have been possible without much volunteer support.

First, thanks to Austin Eade for erecting the TRTA plaque at the Trail-Marker No.1 (Flag-Pole), near the entrance of the Craik Park;

Many thanks to Don Wilkins for leveling a road to his pasture and installing a beautiful steel gate which was donated by Vern Mittleholz;

Thanks to Kevin Binder and Tom Miller for installing hitching posts and repairing a portable toilet for the use of TRTA on trail rides;

Thanks to the Bakken family on whose land the Birding Platform has been installed; and finally,

Thanks to our Directors and others for their continuing help and support.

## Ideas for the TRTA Newsletter

One purpose of this Newsletter is to document the natural history and folk stories of our region, like the stories told in this edition. Mrs. Vi Spencer has assigned an Archives accession number for the TRTA Newsletters at the Palliser Library, Craik. They will be saved for posterity. We would welcome some 'suggestions and leads' to work on for future articles. We also need photographs. Phone or write your ideas to Ed (567-4215) or [edspratt@sasktel.net](mailto:edspratt@sasktel.net)

**Editorial comment Re:** The lake at Aylesbury (last Newsletter) – It may have been named after Princess Alexandra, thus it might be called Alexandra Lake not Alexander Lake. Any other comments? Send to Ed Spratt, TRTA Newsletter Editor, PO Box 610, Davidson, S0G 1A0