

Three Rivers Trail Newsletter

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

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

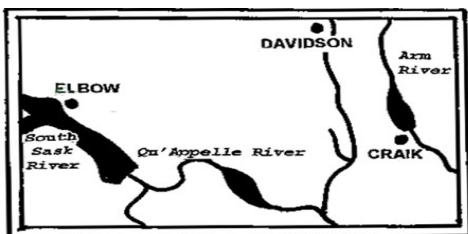
No.2, Winter 2004

The TRTA Objectives:

- 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 promote the beauty of valley vistas, the prairie geography and the 'spirit' of the land;
- 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
Ed Spratt, Davidson (Chairman)
Shirley Eade, Craik (Sec./Treasurer)

TRTA Birding and Canoeing :

The Arm River wetlands are well known for birds, especially as a stop-over for migratory water fowl spring and fall. Some communities in Saskatchewan have capitalized on their wildlife concentration to develop a tourist attraction, e.g., Chaplin, Last Mountain Reserve, and Quill Lakes.

Recently the Mid-Lakes Community Coalition (MLCC) has started to promote birding as a tourism attraction in our Three Rivers Area. They invited Prof. Joe Schmutz of the U of S to address a meeting explaining Nature Saskatchewan's promotional activities aimed at conserving birding areas. There have been 53 Important Bird Areas (IBA) identified in Saskatchewan. These areas are likely to have 1% of the global population of a bird species or an endangered species.

Don Wilkins has several hundred acres of prairie and wetland (marsh) reserved for wildlife at the north end of Arm Lake. He has said that the public is free to

visit this area through the auspices of TRTA. A TRTA trail will be established going from Craik Golf Course, north along the west side of the Craik Reservoir.



Canoeing on Arm Lake



Visitors will also be free to visit the wetlands at the north end of the Craik Reservoir by canoe. Directly north of Craik on the municipal road, the Bakken family has a dock where many fishers and canoeists enter the lake.

Directly above the dock, on the south side of the road, local birders are building an observation deck. The land belongs to the RM of Arm River (about 2 acres) but they are consigning it to public use (in association with an unused road allowance).

To fully develop the Craik Birding Observation Deck, Barbara Hanbidge, a biologist, with Ducks Unlimited will lend her expertise. She is also their education coordinator. One of the first activities of the local birders will be to get schools involved.



The Birding Observation Deck is south of the road past McCaw's cabin (above). Bakken's boat ramp is left on the north side of this road. Signs will be placed on the

Louis Riel Trail (No.11) at the road going north from Craik, 3.7 km to the Observation Deck.

Arm Lake and the Craik Regional Park:

Not many people in the Craik community call the reservoir held back by the Craik dam as the “Arm Lake”. However, that is what it is called by the Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, and the Information Services Corporation (ISC) prints maps with the Arm River and Arm Lake clearly marked. It is not so named on the RM of Craik map. The lake is nearly 7 km long, about 400 m wide and 10 m deep. In addition to spring run-off, it is fed by Arm River ‘springs’.

CNR built a dam on the Arm River in the early 1900’s to supply water to the trains. It was about 500 meters north of the new dam. By the late 50’s the old CNR dam was in disrepair and held only a small amount of water. The new Craik dam was built in 1961/62 by the PFRA. It was turned over to the Craik Municipality No.222 in 1964. The new dam is 330 m long and 11 m high, and holds back 27000 acre-ft of water. In 1969 the lake flooded over the dam and caused considerable damage (the run-off was considered a once in a hundred years event). The dam was raised 60 cm and the spillway improved. This sustained another flood that occurred in 1974, which was deemed a once in 200 year event.

Over the period of time from July 1963 to June 1964, meetings were held in Craik to organize a Regional Park. The original meeting was hosted by the Craik Chamber of Commerce, with 17 local delegates attending, to hear the representative from the Region Parks Division of the Sask Dept of Natural Resources explain the procedure for setting up a Regional park. By June 1964 the Board of Directors was selected(mostly from the Town of Craik, RM of Craik, and RM of Arm River) and an agreement was signed with the Gov’t of Sask. Brake Howarth was the first Sec/Treasurer and head of the development committee. There was also a Golf Club committee. Over the next few years the campground site (26 acres) was improved by fencing, leveling, planting trees and establishing camping sites.

In 1969/70, toilets, drinking water, and a camp kitchen were built in preparation for the Craik Homecoming in 1971. The Craik Regional Park was officially ‘opened’ on 18 July 1971 during Craik Homecoming Week. The current pool was built in 1967. It is fan shaped (about 100 m across the shallow end and 50 m wide at the deep end with a 3 m diving board. It has an asphalt base and plenty of sand for the beach. It has its own well. The summer swimming lessons draw hundreds of children from a many regional communities. There are now 55 camping sites with mature trees. There is a large covered kitchen area to accommodate community picnics, and a concession which operates during the summer.

Aside from the Camp Grounds, the major activity of the Regional Park are the boating facilities and the Golf Club. Boat unloading ramps were built in 1967. Initially 300 000 pickerel were stocked in the lake. Fish stocks are maintained with addition of fingerlings under the auspices of the Sask Dept Natural Resources, and many fishers find both summer and winter fishing rewarding.

For more information contact:

TRTA, c/o PO Box 367,
Craik, SK S0G 0V0

or see

www.craik.ca

The history of golfing at Craik goes back to 1966, when Gunnar Carslon sold 26.5 acres to the golf club. In 1968 Jim Hassett moved the school building from the Eclipse SD (South of Craik near Luther’s) to the golf course to be used as the club house. Recently the Craik Golf Club under took a large re-development program. It now has 9 holes with irrigated grass greens. As of 2004, it will be associated with a bar and restaurant, as part of Craik’s Sustainable Living Project (CSLP). More news on the CSLP and the “Eco-Center” will be in the next TRTA Newsletter.



Trail Ride Planned for May:

Last year on the May long-weekend, TRTA had a successful trail ride from the Craik Park to the Benz Ranch going along the Arm River (see photos). This year, when the Craik Regional Park has it’s opening day, TRTA hopes to sponsor another trail ride, this time going north along the lake to Wilkin’s Wildlife Refuge. After a pancake breakfast, it will start across from the park gate and proceed along the edge of the Golf Course to the road north (west side of the lake). One challenge is to get the horses across the noisy bridges.

After the next TRTA board meeting, look forward to getting more details on this trail ride - in the spring TRTA Newsletter, posters and announcements in the Craik & Davidson papers.

