



International Mountain Section Society for Range Management

Fall 2022 Newsletter



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**SAVE
THE
DATE**

Upcoming IMS events

Mark your calendars for this upcoming event!



SRM- IMS FALL MEETING **"Range Stewardship: Transitions to the Next Generation"**

Please join us in person at the
[Coast Lethbridge Hotel & Conference Centre](#)
See below for the online option.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4th — 9-4 pm, MST

3 registration/payment options:

1. Online attendance only (\$35 per person)

<https://events.eventzilla.net/e/srm--ims-fall-2022-meeting-online-only-2138573083>

2. In-person attendance (\$75 per person, pay using credit card/PayPal)

<https://events.eventzilla.net/e/society-for-range-management--ims--fall-2022-meeting-in-person-2138573080>

3. In-person attendance, Students (\$35 per person, pay using credit card/PayPal)

<https://events.eventzilla.net/e/soc-for-range-management--ims--fall-2022-meeting-students-2138572811>

4. In-person attendance (\$75 per person pay using cheque or cash - CND currency, please)

If you are planning to pay with cash, please email your registration (to avoid additional charges through Eventzilla) to Lisa at srm.ims11@gmail.com.

Please contact Jennifer or Lisa at srm.ims11@gmail.com
for more information. Check us out on Facebook or Twitter



MEETING AGENDA

Society for Range Management, International Mountain Section

Draft Agenda for Fall Annual Meeting, Nov 4, 2022

SRM IMS Fall Business Meeting

9:00 am to noon

All are welcome (attendance is optional)

Catered Roast Beef Buffet Lunch

noon to 1:00 pm

Workshop

"Range Stewardship: Transitions to the Next Generation"

1:00 pm to 4:30 pm

1:00 – SRM Awards – Gerry Taillieu Memorial Award - Rancher recipient

1:30 – Sarah Green – 5th Generation Manager, Mount Sentinel Ranch (SW AB)

2:00 – Natasha Rinas – Rangeland Program Specialist, Alberta Environment & Parks

2:30 – Bruce Johnson – Senior Project Manager, Salix Resource Management, Ltd.;
and Katherine Johnson – Junior Range Agrologist, Tannas Conservation Services

3:00 – Break

3:15 – Darin Sherritt – Senior Environmental Scientist, Tannas Conservation Services

3:45 – Norine Ambrose – Executive Director, Cows & Fish

4:15 – Wrap up

Please contact Jennifer or Lisa at srm.ims11@gmail.com
for more information. Check us out on Facebook or Twitter



The Grass that Looks like Wool

By: Karin Lindquist, BSc., PAg.

Author and founder of Praise the Ruminant at <https://praisetheruminant.com>

For most people, it's easy to overlook this plant as "just more grass." Highly regarded as a native forage species that maintains its quality into the winter, this species is valued by ranchers and nature conservationists alike.

It's known by many names, but we know it as a native climax species of the northern prairie grasslands. We also know it by how it lays on the ground in the fall and after the snows have gone, garnering the nickname "prairie wool."

If you haven't guessed yet, here's another hint: it's Alberta's provincial grass. Yes, that's right, it's Plains Rough Fescue, *Festuca hallii*.

F. hallii is a grass that has seen the rise and fall of the great grazing herds of North America. A bunchgrass with many tillers, it has become specially adapted to being grazed during the dormant season, less through the growing season.

It is well known to be a "decreaser," meaning that it decreases in population when grazed during the normal grazing season. Its palatability is high when growing (and still fairly high into the winter). But, if pushed too hard, and grazed too often, like most grass species it soon diminishes from the stand.

On the other hand, when not grazed for a long period of time (such as over several years), it will do the opposite, and soon dominate the stand. Grazing creates that necessary disturbance and damage to this species so that the canopy is opened up, more sunlight can reach the soil surface, encouraging more and different species to emerge from the wool-like layer of this species.

Its advantage to being best utilized in the dormant season might be attributed to its adaptation to the movements of the old bison herds. Historical records before settlers arrived have recorded bison migrating north to the Prairie Provinces during the winter, then moving south to the Great Plains for summer grazing. These natural patterns allowed this species (and related rough fescue species) to grow as much as it could during the summer and shut down come fall when the first animals begin to arrive.

Maintaining this species' integrity in a much-changed landscape from the early 1800s has meant learning range management practices that guarantees its survival. Ranchers have had to adopt grazing practices where they had to defer grazing of these native grasslands to the fall and winter instead of predictable spring and summer. This, no doubt, would have required a shift in thinking of how grasslands should be grazed.

That's not all. It's also sensitive to environmental conditions in terms of producing flowers and seeds. Its primary means of reproduction is via tillers, but when conditions are perfect, a single plant that may be hundreds of years old can produce multiple inflorescences. And is it ever exciting to find them!

Alberta's provincial grass is a beautiful grass that deserves admiration and preservation for years to come. Manage them well, and they will thrive!



Plains Rough Fescue. Photo: Karin Lindquist.

Plenty of Range Events in Montana in 2022

There was no excuse for not increasing your range knowledge in Montana this year. In February, the MT Soil Health Symposium was held in Billings, MT featuring Dr. Allen Williams, Milton Ranch and Mannix Bros. Ranch covering topics from how grass grows to on the ground application of adaptive grazing systems to diversifying products from the ranch.

June was a busy month for range activities across the state, the MT Grazinglands Conservation Initiative held their first annual summer tour at the Haughian Ranch at Kinsey, MT. It was a beautiful day and great spring weather had the rangeland looking green and glorious! Featured speakers included CattleFax, Fort Keogh Ag. Research Service scientists and Miles City Veterinary Service and included a great ranch tour headed by Terry Haughian. The 406 Grazing Academy was held at Lewistown and involved ranchers and land managers in 3 days of range and ranch management education and hands-on skill building. Later in June, the annual education event for young and old, known as MT Range Days, was held at Shelby.



Participants listen to a speaker at the Grazinglands Conservation Initiative's Field Day at the Haughian Ranch near Kinsey, MT.

It had about 100 participants who learned about all the characteristics of rangeland and the many values of rangeland to our country. Finally, June ended with a tour of the Joe King Ranch at Winnett, this year's winner of the Northwest region's National Cattlemen's Beef Association Environmental Stewardship award and a tour of Hidden Hollow Hideaway Ranch the winner of this past year's Leopold Conservation award.

Things picked back up again in August with the MT Range Tour which included a tour of the Sieben Live Stock Ranch and two days with Understanding Ag's. Alejandro Carrillo, a regenerative rancher from Chihuahua, Mexico and speakers on beaver mimicry, predator management, feral swine and partnerships.



As part of the same tour, Rick Caquelin, and Kevin Derzapf- Montana NRCS State Rangeland Specialist, taking a closer look at the plant community. Photo credit: Stacey Barta.

Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women, July 2022



Female ranchers from across the prairies gathered to learn from experts and share their experiences with others in southern Alberta. Participants had in-class teaching as well as field-based learning experiences. All photos courtesy of Emily Purvis.

This year marks the 19th annual Southern Alberta Grazing School for Women—an exciting and ground-breaking event that brings together ranching women for two days of learning and sharing experiences. The southern school began in 2003 and was modelled after the Original Grazing School for Women, which typically takes place in northeastern Alberta. With both schools, women from across the province can participate—this year, we had participants at the southern school from all over from Alberta, Saskatchewan, and even Manitoba! Through these events we aim to bring together like-minded women to discuss and learn about sustainable agriculture, long-term livestock management strategies, and environmental education. The real benefit, however, may be the passive learning that comes through casual conversations with other individuals in the ranching community.



This year, the southern Alberta school came together in Oyen, Alberta, through a diverse collaboration of committee members, and through the willingness of all our speakers and participants. We were pleased to hear from several speakers this year. During the in-class portions, attendees learned about grazing practices and principles, soil health, veterinary issues and treatment, remote cattle monitoring, wildlife and

sustainable agriculture, and local producers' entrepreneurial endeavours. In-class portions were followed by in-field workshops, where participants learned about assessing range and riparian health. With so many exceptional speakers and fascinating conversations between participants, everyone seemed to walk away with a few more tools in their belt. We look forward to gathering again next year!

*To learn more, go to our Facebook page at:
[https://www.facebook.com/
GrazingSchools4Women/](https://www.facebook.com/GrazingSchools4Women/)*



Plant Profile: Scarlet Butterfly-weed

by Jillian Kaufmann

*Scarlet Butterfly-weed (Oenothera suffrutescens);
Synonyms: Scarlet gaura, Scarlet bee blossom*

Scarlet butterfly-weed (also known as scarlet gaura or scarlet bee blossom) is a native perennial species of the Evening Primrose family. It has a broad range, and is found throughout North America. The white to scarlet flowers have a sweet scent that is said to be more prominent at night. It is considered a noxious weed in some states due to its extensive rhizomatous root system that can form large colonies. The photo below shows a carpet of scarlet butterfly-weed on a slope of remnant native grassland near Hussar, Alberta, that appeared to be impacted by aerial herbicide application given the proximity to the adjacent cropland. This suggests it may be a colonizing species following disturbance.



Photos contributed by Jillian Kaufmann.

Kinsella Research Ranch Field Day, July 2022

The Rangeland Research Institute (RRI) and Livestock Gentec partnered on July 20th to host a field day at the University of Alberta's (U of A) Roy Berg Kinsella Research Ranch. The event focused on innovations in land and animal technologies to build climate resilience and showcased pioneering tools and approaches, such as precision ranching, virtual fencing, drone use in agriculture, greenhouse gas assessments, GrowSafe feed bunks, and genomic tools.



Dr. Edward Bork and MSc student, Alexandra Harland, talk about the virtual fencing project. The group observes the invisible fenceline where cattle have grazed the pasture we are standing in, but not across the 'line'. Photo: Lisa Raatz.

The field day was an excellent way to bridge the gap between researchers and the agricultural community and encourage discussion. "You can tell this is very valuable to producers as they are engaged and asking questions" said Mark Redmond, CEO of Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR). This is the first time many researchers and producers have been face-to-face since COVID-19 began.

One of the Field Day's main goals was to demonstrate to producers the research being done by U of A investigating precision ranching technologies, their benefits, drawbacks, and development, all for the benefit of the beef industry. The event was also used to showcase the collaboration of institutions that share the commitment to improve the productivity of the beef industry. Researchers from different organizations had the opportunity to present their work. Dr. Carolyn

Fitzsimmons (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Research Lead at the ranch) talked about GrowSafe and the Kinsella ranch herds; Dr. Susan Markus (Lakeland College) spoke about replacement heifer selection, and Dr. John Church (Thompson Rivers University) spoke about using drones to manage rangeland. Master's students from U of A also talked about their projects at the ranch, along with Diego Martinez Mayorga, a student working at Livestock Gentec this summer, who spoke on genomics tools for terminal sire selection.

The event's overarching theme was Precision Ranching, which is all about "putting the right animal in the right place at the right time," says Dr. Edward Bork, professor at the U of A and Director and Mattheis Chair in Rangeland Ecology and Management. Precision ranching is not just one research project; it encompasses multiple projects from various animal and plant research fields. At the Field Day, researchers demonstrated how to choose the right cow with tools like GPS collars and ear tags, pedometers and genomics to select for the optimal temperament, efficiency and productivity. To



GrowSafe feed bunks at the U of Alberta Kinsella Research Ranch. Dr. Carolyn Fitzsimmons (AAFC and research lead at the Kinsella Ranch) gave an overview of the GrowSafe system and the main herds at the ranch. Photo: Lisa Raatz.

find the right place, a producer can use new drone technology to find the pasture with the highest quality forage at any point in time and virtual fencing that enables adaptive grazing management. To find the right time, Dr. Bork's team is looking into determining a cow's feed preference from fecal samples to determine which plants are being consumed at each stage of the grazing season.

The day concluded with thanks from U of A to producers for coming out and learning about the work being done.

"I've been coming for a long time" says David Andrews, Livestock Gentec's Board Chair. "There's always lots to learn every time, always something new. You get to actually interact with researchers, and this is a spectacular facility for research".

One cow/calf and backgrounding producer expressed his appreciation, declaring that this was a "very useful day". He was excited about the new technologies in development and saw the applications for his own operations today. As a multi-generational farmer, he expressed his eagerness for his children and grandchildren to put to use the tools seen at this Field Day to real life: "I wish I had 20 more years to see it all happen," he said.

Written by Jacqui Gironella and Diego Martinez Mayorga

Right: Amir Behrouzi (AAFC) is investigating methane emissions from cattle in pasture. The Greenfeed unit measures methane as the cows come for a feed pellet treat.

Below left: Dr. Gleise Silva, the new Hays Chair in Beef Production Systems at U of Alberta, discusses her project assessing heat stress in cattle.

Below right: Dr. John Church demonstrates the use of UAVs (Unmanned aerial vehicles or drones) for tracking cattle, including scaring off predators, as needed. All photos by Lisa Raatz.



Let's talk SHARP! Connecting & Collaborating with Producers

Maintaining wildlife habitat and sustainable grazing practices go hand-in-hand. Diverse and healthy ecosystems provide stability and are more resilient to natural disturbances such as wildfire, flood, and drought. Healthy rangeland ecosystems also provide benefits to cattle—improved water quality and availability, reduced weed invasion, and higher forage production. Given the extent rangelands occupy, landowners and managers have always played an important role as rangeland stewards in maintaining and providing sustainability of rangelands and ecosystem services including wildlife habitat, biodiversity, water filtration, and carbon sequestration.



Wood frogs possess the unique adaptation to survive freezing of their internal body fluids in winter. This allows them to hibernate in a wide variety of microhabitats such as in leaf and grass litter, beneath clump- or mat-forming plants in shallow soil where exposure to sub-zero temperatures is inevitable. Photo: Kris Kendall.

Species Habitat Assessments and Ranching Partnership (SHARP) is a collaboration between Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP), ALUS (originally an acronym for Alternative Land Use Services), and Alberta producers. This voluntary stewardship project delivered by ACA in central and northwestern Alberta supports producers that want to maintain and develop sustainable grazing management practices to further increase, maintain, and improve wildlife habitat, while mutually benefiting the producer's operations.

We complete baseline wildlife inventories as well as in-depth range and riparian health assessments. Range and riparian assessments follow protocols developed by Alberta Public Lands and Cows and Fish, respectively, that look at plant communities, moisture retention, weeds, etc. Based on these assessments plant communities are identified and stocking rates are recommended to ensure sustainable grazing. Producers are provided with all the information collected so they can make informed decisions about their property.



ACA staff member conducting an early morning songbird survey. Photo: Amanda Rezanoff.

We cooperatively find solutions that are feasible and sustainable to a producer's operations and help implement on-the-ground enhancements and grazing strategies that also benefit wildlife habitat. As enhancements are made, we develop a monitoring plan to assess progress and effectiveness. Enhancements may include wildlife-friendly fencing (e.g., smooth wires on top and bottom strands) to facilitate movement of ungulates but still a barrier to cattle, and installation of portable or fixed watering systems that pump water from a nearby water source. Used with or without riparian fencing, these enhancements can encourage better livestock distribution and decrease loss of riparian vegetation, erosion, and sediment deposition in waterbodies to improve water quality for the benefit of livestock and a wide range of plant and wildlife species.



The prairie crocus is a long-lived perennial that may live for 50 years or more if habitat is suitable. Photo: Kris Kendall.

The long-term goal of SHARP is to develop and implement strategies that help producers manage their rangelands sustainably and effectively for wildlife habitat and other valuable ecosystem services for generations to come.

You can find out more about SHARP on ACA's website: ab-conservation.com



Plant litter on rangelands reduces soil warming and improves soil moisture by decreasing water evaporation. Invertebrates thrive in grass and leaf litter and provide foraging opportunities for amphibians, songbirds, grouse, and various other species. Photo: Taylor Lund.

Plant Profile: Two-grooved milk vetch

by Jillian Kaufmann

*Two-grooved milk vetch (Astragalus bisulcatus);
Synonyms: Silver-leafed milkvetch, Two-grooved poison vetch*

Two-grooved milk vetch is aptly named after its two-grooved seed pods which are noticeable later in the summer. Although a very eye-catching plant, its unpleasant odour deters from its potential as an ornamental species (Tannas 2004).

Two-grooved milk vetch is valued for its ability to stabilize alkali-affected soils and as a nectar source for insects and pollinators. What it is not valued for is forage for livestock due to its ability to take up toxic quantities of selenium from soil. Risk of livestock poisoning is greatest in the spring when milk vetch emerges prior to many other plants, in overgrazed conditions where no other forage is available, and within alkali-affected landscapes containing selenium-rich soils. Plants hayed retain their toxicity as well. Two-grooved milk vetch is commonly found across prairie and parkland regions, and occasionally in the southern foothills. Its habitat includes dry grasslands, eroded banks, coulee slopes, soils high in clay and alkalinity, and generally drought prone and infertile areas.



Photos taken near Cayley, Alberta, within a dry coulee characterized by high levels of sodium and sulphate in the soil.

Gerry Taillieu Memorial Award Recipient, 2022



Congratulations to the recipients of the 2022 Gerry Taillieu Memorial Award: Darrell and Lori Fipke from the County of Wetaskiwin in Central Alberta! This award, for excellence in rangeland management, will be presented at our Fall Annual Meeting on November 4th, 2022 in Lethbridge, Alberta.

Barry's Update on the UN's 2026 International Year of Rangeland & Pastoralists

Well, every few months between SRM-IMS Newsletters brings us a few months closer to the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists. It may seem like 2026 is a long way away, but it will be here in a rangeland heartbeat.

As part of the run-up to the IYRP the International Affairs Committee of the parent society is planning 2 special sessions for the upcoming annual meeting in Boise this coming February. The IAC will host a workshop during the meeting to kickstart the planning process for IYRP events in North America. This workshop has been approved and is tentatively scheduled for the Tuesday of the meeting (split over the lunch hour). If you are interested in participating, you can do that as the SRM-IMS representative or as just an avid participant.

The second IYRP special session will be a global event unto itself. The title of this second special session is "Global Issues Influencing Success for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP), 2026 and Beyond". This will be a fully virtual event with attendance from around the globe. Talks will focus on issues of widespread importance such as water governance, afforestation of rangelands, a proposal for global certification of sustainable products from rangelands and more. You are most welcome

to participate in both of these special sessions and the Boise annual meeting is your conduit. These sessions and the rest of the meeting are coming together nicely.

Barry Irving



To find out more about the upcoming 2023 SRM Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho, go to:

<https://rangelands.org/annual-meeting-2023/>

To learn more about the significance of the United Nations' 2026 designation, go to:

<https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/un-names-2026-as-the-international-year-of-rangelands-and-pastoralists/en>

Open Letter from Montana to SRM IMS American "Prairie and Bison: An alternative view"

I am concerned about what may be happening in our section in regard to the American Prairie's (AP) application to change class of stock.

Having read the Environmental Assessment (EA), I too have questions that amount to filling in details that I could get answers for in a visit with BLM and managers/advisors for AP. Why SRM and our sections are reluctant to engage in a professional manner with AP while exaggerating the outcomes of a permit change with speculation is troublesome. I agree, that on occasions we hear what might seem "crazy", but I hear crazy things from ranchers and others. Hence input from the "collective" ranching community is fraught with as much wonderment.

In regards to BLM grazing permits, it is important to understand grazing regulations for public land (43 CFR 4100). Year-round grazing authorization does not necessarily mean that the stock are going to be in the same place year-round. Permitted use etc does not necessarily mean that amount of forage will be consumed each year.

If the circumstances of today were applied to the circumstance of changing from bison to other livestock some 150 years ago, that change of livestock from bison would not be endorsed. The change from bison was forcibly carried out and destroyed the culture, traditions and economy of peoples. We've since learned that this historic switch in big grazers also altered the ecology, etc. That is history! We cannot go back! We cannot stop time and keep things the same! What we can do is act in the interest of tomorrow. AP has an evolving management paradigm and vision for the future. AP's vision includes healthy functioning rangelands as SRM has continued to tout.

Many fences on the public land were installed to accommodate ranchers' wants and not necessarily sound rangeland management. Others were installed in a belief, at the time, of good rangeland management which we have come to recognize were not such a good idea. These actions are history! A growing body of range ecology indicates there is a case to manage ecosystems on larger scales. Just as it is unrealistic to expect to "rewild" central Montana our understanding of rangeland processes gained should lead us to rethink continuing practices of the present and past.

Bison could have some troublesome aspects, but any of us that have been around for any length of time, continue to see damaging effects on ecosystem health, economy and cultural by cattle grazing.

Drawing parallel assumptions with Yellowstone National Park (YNP) is misleading. Yellowstone is a 100 plus years old, 100% public owned property. It changed the ecology as well as the local economy and culture. There are notable issues with YNP. SRM has tried to influence management of the park in a responsible way. Yellowstone was established "For the benefit and enjoyment of the people" and whether that includes healthy functioning rangelands is a hot button issue.

The park bison herds function(ed) differently than those "north of the Missouri". This means that within the broader management philosophies of YNP and AP comparison of bison behavior and grassland impacts between the two locations is not appropriate.

AP is a relatively new, private funded and owned property/enterprise, and their orientation is different than that of Yellowstone. How difficult AP will be is still forming. Unlike YNP there is a very basic American value at stake: unfretted private property rights. Imposing our will and prejudices on a private entity has been repeatedly rejected in our national discourse and at least is not good for our professional standing.

Hijacking SRM for personal and/or political agendas to thwart actions by a private landowner/permittee, it is not acceptable and damages the integrity of our section(s) and SRM. "Lobbying" on behalf of or against a use or user of rangelands is not the same as "advocating" in the interest of scientifically and evidence base responsible resource management. In many ways it is apparent that this situation is not about bison but a "culture war" and bison grazing is just the scapegoat. Are we seeking common ground or are we being prejudiced and exclusive?

Let's keep our eye on the reason we exist and not demonize others that might have a different management paradigm, with ultimately, a shared goal of healthy functioning rangelands for the future.

Lou Hagener



Front Cover: Near Tomahawk, Alberta. Photo taken by Grant Taillieu.

Back Cover: Kinsella Ranch Field Day, photo taken by Lisa Raatz.

Special thanks to our funders:
Alberta Environment and Parks.



International Mountain Section Society for Range Management

Please email: srm.ims11@gmail.com