Portage Sandhills W.M.A. (located 11 miles south of Portage la Prairie on PR240)

May 22

20 members  32 plant species surveyed

Portage Sandhills is one of 4 sandhill complexes in Manitoba. Around 15,000 years ago at the end of the last Ice Age the glaciers began to melt and the ancient Assiniboine River began to flow into Lake Agassiz bringing loads of silt and sand with it and forming a huge delta. The delta finally rose above the level of the lake and when the waters drained and shrunk back the exposed sand was formed into dunes by the wind. Portage Sandhills are located on the eastern edge of that huge delta and Carberry sandhills on the western edge. (Lauder and and Routledge Sandhills were created by deltas formed by floodwaters rushing into Glacial Lake Hind.) The southwestern corner of the province was the first to become ice free and plants began to grow and adapt to the hot and dry conditions on the sandhills. The climate was warmer then. When the climate started to cool about 5000 years ago and the prairies retreated, trees and other plants began to take over the dunes but a few of these specialized plant species remained and some are still there today. In the Portage W.M.A. which comprises 1600ha or about 5 sections of land one can still find unusual plant species like hairy prairie clover, prickly pear cactus, long-leaved houstonia, plantain-leaved everlasting, skeletonweed and creeping juniper as well as many other beautiful and interesting plants and animals.