

Native Prairie Speaker Series

Title: Mormon Metalmark butterflies: *Apodemia mormo*, an uncommon species in the prairie badlands

Speaker: Dr. Shelley Pruss, Species Conservation Ecologist, Parks Canada; Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Agricultural, Life & Environmental Sciences, University of Alberta

Summary: The Prairie population of the Mormon metalmark butterfly lives in the badland habitats in and around Grasslands National Park and adjacent community pastures. This Saskatchewan population relies on the branched umbrella plant (*Eriogonum pauciflorum*) as its host plant and an important nectar source. Prior to 2005 only a handful of locations were known for the Prairie population of Mormon metalmarks in Canada, however my team and I conducted extensive surveys and graduate work on modelling micro and macro habitat characteristics over the intervening years. As a result, over 1500 georeferenced butterfly locations and over 5000 hectares of butterfly colonies have been identified. This work generated a number of scientific firsts for the Canadian population of this butterfly as well as the COSEWIC status downlisting from Threatened to Special Concern.

About the Speaker: Shelley Pruss currently works with the Natural Resources Conservation Branch of Parks Canada. She also holds a position as an Adjunct Professor with the University of Alberta. In addition to metalmark butterflies, Shelley has conducted research on a variety of other species such as Greater Sage-grouse, swift fox, greater short-horned lizards, and coyotes as well as recovery planning for multiple species at risk in Grasslands National Parks including bison, prairie dogs, black-footed ferrets, and yellow-bellied racer snakes among others. She is also very involved in animal welfare in an academic and research context.

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