

# CHAMPIONS

## FOR OUR COMMON FUTURE

*Ordinary people taking extraordinary action*

### RAY GLASRUD PROTECTS GRASSLANDS

Ray Glasrud grew up on grain farm near Mazenod, which is close to Gravelbourg. Growing up on the farm taught him the value of hard work and self-reliance. It also instilled in him an appreciation for open spaces, nature, and wildlife, which provided the foundation for his life's work.

After he graduated from high school, his love of wildlife led him to the University of Montana where he studied Wildlife Biology, after which he pursued a career in wildlife research and habitat conservation. For several years, he worked for the Canadian Wildlife Service, the New Zealand Forest Service, and the US Antarctic Service, among others.

Ray eventually became tired of the politics that seemed to permeate his chosen field. He felt that science had become secondary to politics. So, in 1982 he decided to return to agriculture. He and his wife Linda had saved enough money to buy land. He could now pursue his lifelong interest in ranching. His 9000-acre ranch is mostly native prairie and has many unique landscapes. It is also rich with history. It features remnants of life in the region before colonization. The ranch's name, "Pole Trail Ranch Company", plays homage to the North-West Mounted Police Pole Trail from Wood Mountain to Moose Jaw that Ray's grandfather had followed when he came to the region to homestead.



Ray and Linda knew from the outset that they wanted to protect the existing grassland on the ranch, as well as re-establish grassland in areas that had been broken. They understood that grasslands are critical for biodiversity and habitat, but that they are also one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. For support and assistance, they turned to Nature Saskatchewan, an organization that offers a variety of programs and resources to help landowners protect threatened habitats and species. One of the first ways that Nature Saskatchewan helped was to provide financial assistance to help them reseed about 500 acres of the ranch which in Ray's opinion should never have been broken. They also participate in Nature Saskatchewan's wildlife monitoring programs, particularly by monitoring the population of Loggerhead Shrikes and Ferruginous Hawks on their land.

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Ray knows that large ruminants can be an important part of keeping grasslands healthy and productive. Among other things, healthy grasslands provide habitat for pollinators, help regulate water, sequester carbon, and control erosion. Grasslands co-evolved with grazing animals, but on the great plains the bison that once roamed are now largely gone. Cattle can help fill that role, but only if they are properly managed. To do this, Ray uses rotational grazing to ensure that his land is not overgrazed. He also protects water sources and keeps outside interests such as oil companies limited in their activities. Ray and his family think it is vitally important that as much of the natural world that remains should be protected from human destruction and preserved for future generations.

*This column is a collaborative project of the Saskatchewan Environmental Society and the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development – RCE Saskatchewan.*



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**Saskatchewan Environmental Society** is a non-profit, registered charity that is committed to supporting sustainable living and sustainable resource use in Saskatchewan. We work with, and on behalf of, communities, organizations, businesses, and policy makers to encourage

informed decision-making that moves us towards sustainability. SES's current action areas include sustainable energy and climate solutions, water protection, resource conservation, biodiversity preservation, and reduction of toxic substances. Our work in Saskatchewan is carried out in Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, and our office is in Saskatoon on Treaty 6, the traditional territory of Cree peoples and the homeland of the Métis Nation. Learn more at: [www.environmentalsociety.ca](http://www.environmentalsociety.ca)



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