

## Remembrance Day Spirit Sands Hike

All was quiet on the Western Front (actually, the CFB Shilo firing range next door) as the WWC marked Remembrance Day with the traditional Spirit Sands hike. Bert's Dad, who spent time during the war training at Shilo, was always particularly interested in this hike, and would say, when Bert told him about the hike, "Look for my footprints in the sand". (Actually, this was the only hike he was really interested in; when told about any other physical activity or travel he would say, "You've only got so many miles in you. Don't use them up", or "It's just rocks and trees anywhere. You might as well stay home".

If you haven't explored this Spruce Woods micro-environment recently, you should do it soon, as the surrounding forest is rapidly encroaching on the historic desert landscape, and before long the sands will lose the fight with trees and grasses.

For now, a small piece of "dessert" remains, as Eldon, Linda, Fred, Dover, Bert, Judy, Shelly and Katherine experienced as they braved cool temperatures to explore this unique Manitoba landscape.



. The sand hills are home to numerous species of flora and fauna unique to this region, most of which are rarely encountered when hiking the hills. We did see big clumps of pincushion cacti on this trip, however, as well as a berry we haven't been able to identify. It's a red berry surrounded by 3 lobes that look a bit like flowers, but are more like a hard husk.

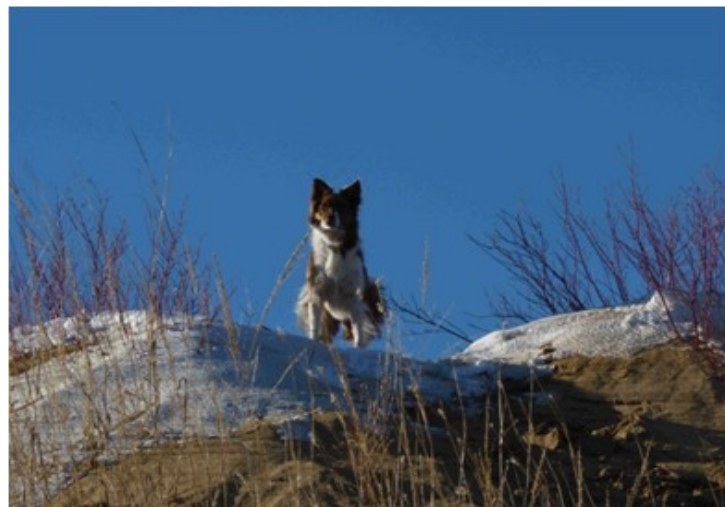


While the rest of us headed off to the punch bowl, Bert, Fred, Dover and Katherine—the rabbits in the group—took the extra loop to the oasis, while the rest of us headed off to the punch bowl and spent some time dawdling at the spectacular view points along the way. They caught up with us eventually as we left the final viewpoint over the Assiniboine for the home stretch, and they headed up to the punch bowl lookout. Soon Katherine had caught up with us, as she got worried that she might miss her ride home. While the "bunnies" are quick while in motion, photo stops make the total trip time unpredictable.

We all met within a few minutes at the trail head, and headed off for refreshments at the Robin's Nest. Unfortunately, the Robin's Nest was observing Remembrance Day, so we went our separate ways without the hot chocolate we'd been hoping for.



Climbing up the face of the dunes is still a work out, and Dover wasn't at all impressed with the speed of WWC members' progress. In fact, he spent much of the day darting ahead, then looking back at us and barking expectantly when we stopped to look at the views or botanical samples



Can anyone identify this berry?



Devil's Punch Bowl