

The background of the entire page is a repeating pattern of stylized green leaves. The leaves are rendered in a light green color with white outlines and vein structures, scattered across the white background.

Seven Things You Should Know

Nature Alberta Annual Report

2015-2016

Contents

- Preamble 3
- 1. We turned 45 this year – but we’re really just getting started. 4
- 2. We are a community connected by a love of nature. 6
- 3. We are embarking on an exciting new journey. 8
- 4. We can’t do what we do without our people. 10
- 5. We’re making good things happen and we’re having an impact. 16
- 6. We’re pressed by limited resources but rising to the challenge. 24
- 7. We’re better positioned than ever to take on what comes next. 28

Preamble

2015-2016 was a year of change and transition for Nature Alberta. So, when we started thinking about developing our 2015-2016 annual report, we decided we wanted to do something just a little bit different this year. Something that demonstrates our commitment to reporting to you, but also shows that we can be creative with how we provide you, our members, our partners, our stakeholders, our community, with a concise but informative overview of our accomplishments, highlight the challenges and opportunities we faced this past year, and express our views on what the future holds and the path forward.

This creativity reflects and continues the way we have approached much of what we have done this past year. We are respecting our past yet embracing change, approaching what we do and how we do it with an open mind and a willingness to do things just a bit differently. All the while, we are keeping the goal – to ensure Alberta’s natural heritage is widely enjoyed, deeply appreciated and thoroughly protected – always clearly in sight.



1. We turned 45 this year but we're really just getting started.

The year was 1970. Six nature clubs (Nature Calgary, Edmonton Bird Club, Edmonton Natural History Club, Red Deer River Naturalists, Lethbridge Naturalists and Bow Valley Naturalists) came together to form the Federation of Alberta Naturalists.

45 years later, and now known as Nature Alberta, we are grateful for the clubs, the people and the history that has enabled this organization to become the voice for the greater appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment.

Throughout our history, the things that have been our constant, and which we will remain steadfastly committed to going forward, are instilling natural history education as part of Albertan's values and fostering a sense of environmental stewardship. What has been accomplished during this past year would not have been possible without this path that was set and the foundation that has been laid down over the past 45 years. Several times during 2015 we commemorated our 45th year at events around the province. We received an Emerald Award; the 2015 Emerald Challenge Award: WATER for our long-standing Living by Water program. All of this culminated in a special 45th Anniversary Gala event in November 2015 where more than 80 guests came together to celebrate the clubs, the individuals and the achievements that have made us what we are today.

While we are respectful of our history and appreciative of the knowledge and wisdom that comes with age, we are not resting on our laurels. In fact, the stage has already been set for more great things to come with some of the new initiatives and activities we embarked on this past year, including establishing a strategic partnership with Land Stewardship Centre that will add value and efficiency to the operational aspects of both organizations, as well as to our respective products and programs; conducting our community visitation survey with our member clubs to understand their needs and wants in a changing environment; dedicating staff time and effort to enhancing our outreach and fund development activities with an eye on sustainability; and much more.

45 years in, we are just getting started. We can reflect on and build upon our last four decades in the natural history movement, but it is the future that presents the opportunity for Nature Alberta to refine and strengthen our role in the coming years.



2. We are a community connected by a love of nature.

Message from the Board

The statement that Nature Alberta represents ‘a community connected by a love of nature’ is representative of so many aspects of who we are and what we do as an organization. From the Board of Directors and staff, to our membership, and Alberta’s nature clubs and naturalists, this sense of community is founded on a common purpose and taps into our collective experiences, knowledge, activities and passion to achieve a higher goal – to ensure Alberta’s natural heritage is widely enjoyed, deeply appreciated and thoroughly protected.

As part of this community, Nature Alberta’s Board of Directors plays a central role in keeping the organization innovative, informed and adaptive. Our board consists of representatives from across Alberta, which enables us to incorporate different regional perspectives and geographic contexts, as well as urban and rural perspectives, into our work.

Our board members also comprise a broad spectrum of backgrounds and specializations. We are fortunate to have among us people with science, finance, engineering and non-government/non-profit organization backgrounds, amongst many others. We are made up of passionate birders, mammal experts, botanists, ecologists, hunters, anglers, gardeners and people united by a common love of nature. Our board members are all volunteers, compelled to commit their time and knowledge to the virtues of our mission. There is strength in this diversity and passion, which is catalyzed by our shared love of nature.

Our aim is to offer strategic advice, review initiatives brought forward by staff and evaluate motions brought forward by board members. Our approach is to bolster the good work done by our knowledgeable and experienced staff. Over this past year, through our committees of the board and task teams, we provided strategic guidance, addressed annual awards, discussed prominent environmental issues in Alberta, identified funding opportunities and recruited new board members.

This is a unique and important time for Nature Alberta as we look to the future and plan for how we will continue our mission to be that strong voice for the greater appreciation and conservation of Alberta’s natural environment. Going forward, we will work to refine our committees to ensure consistency and longevity, we will continue to seek out new board members who can bring insight to our organization and creativity to what we do, and we will provide the strategic direction needed to ensure our ‘community connected by a love of nature’ remains strong, resilient and sustainable.

Brian Joubert, Vice-President
On behalf of the Nature Alberta Board of Directors

3. We are embarking on an exciting new journey.

Message from the Executive Director

It was in early 2015 that the Nature Alberta Executive Committee began their search for a part-time Executive Director. It was about this same time that I, as the Executive Director of another non-profit environmental organization, approached members of the Committee and proposed an alternative to the traditional approach to organizational management; an option that was, at the time, a concept that had not been fully tested in the not-for-profit environment in which we both operate.

Philosophically, this concept recognized the natural alignment between our two organizations, their respective visions and mandates, and the belief that working together in effective and creative ways would be a far more productive way of delivering consistent and stable support to the volunteer natural history organizations operating in Alberta. Operationally, the concept involved sharing services between Nature Alberta and Land Stewardship Centre, both which provide programs and resources to many of the same individuals and community groups across Alberta. The approach was new, and some might say ambitious, but the goal was clear, provide programs and services of the highest quality while reducing costs, and then invest those savings directly into programs and services that benefit the community.

The concept was viewed by the Executive Committee as having merit and, while not all the details could be fully envisioned, nor could all the initial questions be answered at the onset, the Nature Alberta Board of Directors approved the concept in principal based on the recommendation of the Committee. This decision demonstrated the true leadership and willingness of the board to explore an alternative approach to management that would help build organizational capacity and sustainability. For this, I am grateful to the Committee members and Directors, individuals who committed to embracing an innovative approach even though we knew the path forward was not entirely clear.

This annual report addresses not only what we have been able to achieve this past year as we implemented this concept, but as importantly, speaks to and recognizes all of the passionate people and organizations that ultimately enable us to do what we do. It is about dedicated men and women; board members, staff and volunteers who invest their time and energy in an organization they firmly believe in; an organization that has celebrated 45 years of educating, connecting and supporting individuals and clubs in their appreciation of nature and the natural environment; an organization that is continually focused on achieving our mission to be a strong voice for the greater appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment.

I am privileged to be able to work with such a great group of individuals; people who are intelligent, caring and extremely committed to their work and to what Nature Alberta stands for. As I reflect on the accomplishments outlined in this year's annual report, I realize how fortunate I am to be able to play a part in the work of Nature Alberta. We are truly embarking on a new journey, one that is founded on and is respectful of our 45 years of history and experience, and yet is looking to advance our mission in a new and innovative manner. It truly is an exciting time for us all and I look forward to connecting with many of you over the coming year to ensure that the work we are doing continues to support your needs and those of the naturalist community in Alberta.

Brian E. Ilnicki, Executive Director

4. We can't do what we do without our people.

Nature Alberta is an organization that is truly more than the sum of its parts – or more correctly the passionate people and committed organizations that have contributed to all that we do. With that we recognize and thank all the individuals, members, organizations, agencies and businesses that have proffered their time, funds, resources, knowledge and expertise to our endeavours over the past year.

It is a long list, but this is important – so please take the time to read through it.

Board of Directors

Executive Committee

- Vacant, President
- Brian Joubert , Vice-President
- Claudia Lipski, Secretary
- Cale Bentley, Treasurer
- Ted Hindmarch, Past President

Appointed Directors

- Christine Brown
- Linda Howitt-Taylor
- Joseph Hnatiuk
- Brian Joubert
- Cale Bentley
- Dale Serink
- Ted Hindmarch

Elected Directors

- Kim MacKenzie, Alberta Native Plant Council
- Claudia Lipski, Buffalo Lake Naturalists
- Kerri Charest, Edmonton Nature Club
- Liz Watts, Friends of Elk Island
- Gary Martin, Grasslands Naturalists
- Wayne Walker, Nature Calgary
- William Brooke, Lac La Biche Birding Society
- Lloyd Bennett, Lethbridge Naturalists Society
- Margot Hervieux, Peace Parkland Naturalists
- Tony Blake, Red Deer River Naturalists

Staff

- Brian Ilnicki, Executive Director
- Brett Campbell, Birds and Biodiversity Coordinator
- Jenna Curtis, Living by Water Coordinator
- Emily Dong, Nature Kids Coordinator
- Alexandra Frederickson, Outreach Coordinator

Corporate and Affiliate Clubs

Our Corporate and Affiliate Clubs comprise the majority of our membership. Combined, our corporate and associate clubs represent thousands of naturalists across Alberta.

Corporate Clubs

- Alberta Native Plant Council
- Buffalo Lake Naturalists
- Calgary Field Naturalists – Nature Calgary
- Edmonton Nature Club
- Friends of Elk Island Society
- Grasslands Naturalists
- Lac La Biche Birding Society
- Lethbridge Naturalists Society
- Peace Parkland Naturalists
- Red Deer River Naturalists

Affiliate Clubs

- Alberta Lake Management Society
- Alberta Lepidopterists Guild
- Alberta Mycological Society
- Beaverhill Bird Observatory
- Beaver River Naturalist Club
- Big Lake Environmental Support Society
- BowKan Birders
- Calgary Bird Banding Society
- Cochrane Environmental Action Committee
- Crooked Creek Conservancy Society
- Crowsnest Conservation Society
- Edmonton Native Plant Group
- Ellis Bird Farm
- Fort Saskatchewan Naturalist Society
- Friends of Blackfoot Society
- Friends of Jasper National Park
- Friends of Little Beaver Lake Society
- Grant MacEwan Mountain Club
- Heritage Tree Foundation of Canada
- J.J. Collett Natural Area Foundation
- Kimmiwan Lake Naturalists
- Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory
- Little Creeks and Rough Fescue Appreciation Society
- Purple Martin Conservancy
- Riverlot 56 Natural Area Society
- Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association
- The Wagner Natural Area Society
- Vermilion River Naturalists
- Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society
- Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association

Individual, Associate and Family Members

This past year we had 194 individuals, 23 associates and 55 families purchase or renew their memberships in Nature Alberta. Thank you for being part of our community.

Volunteers

We extend our appreciation and thanks to the many dedicated event and program volunteers who contributed countless hours to supporting various initiatives and events throughout the year such as Nature Alberta Magazine and NatureWild Magazine, Living by Water, the Hypothermic Half Marathon, Family Nature Nights, and our major casino fundraiser.

Nature Alberta Magazine Production and Distribution

- Dennis Baresco
- Brooke Skagen
- Ted Hindmarch
- Sandra Foss
- Val Scholefield
- Elaine Germyn
- Suzanne Lorinczi
- June Vermuelen

IBA Caretakers

- Beaverhill Bird Observatory
- Big Lake Environmental Support Society
- Brook Skagen
- Buffalo Lake Naturalists
- Chuck Priestly
- Greg Wagner
- Jerry Hall
- Lloyd Bennet
- Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory
- Lac La Biche Birding Society
- Lynn Gratz
- Peace Parkland Naturalists
- Wildlife Society Lethbridge College

Nature Kids Chapter Leaders

- Emily Cicon
- Ashley Hart
- Amanda Lasiuta
- Leanne Boissonnault
- Marianne Masters
- Chantelle Adams

Family Nature Night Contributors

- Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute
- Alberta Geological Survey
- Alberta Lake Management Society
- Alberta Science Network
- Beaverhill Bird Observatory
- City of Edmonton
- Hodgson Wetland Stewardship Group
- Royal Alberta Museum
- Root for Trees
- University of Alberta
- Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton

Living by Water Promoters

- Baptiste and Island Lake Stewardship Society
- Beaver River Watershed Alliance
- Buffalo Lake Naturalists
- Clear Lake Stewardship Association
- Gull Lake Watershed Society
- Hubbles Lake Stewardship Society
- Jackfish Lake Management Association
- Lacombe Lake Watershed Stewardship Society
- Lake Isle and Lac Ste Anne Water Quality Management Society
- Lesser Slave Watershed Council
- Mayatan Lake Management Association
- Muriel Lake Basin Management Society
- Pigeon Lake Watershed Association
- Pine Lake Restoration Society
- Spring Lake Environmental Advisory Committee
- Stewards of Lac La Biche Watershed
- Sylvan Lake Watershed Stewardship Society
- Wabamun Watershed Management Council
- Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association

Project Funders, Sponsors and Donors

So much of what we do is made possible by the generosity and support of our major project funders, as well as our event and initiative sponsors and donors.

Project Funders

- Alberta Conservation Association
- Alberta Culture and Tourism
- Alberta EcoTrust Foundation
- Alberta Emerald Foundation
- Alberta Native Plant Council
- Alberta Science Network
- Calgary Foundation
- Delta Helicopters
- Government of Canada
- Nature Canada
- Pigeon Lake Watershed Association
- Royal Bank of Canada Foundation
- Running Room Canada
- United Way
- Worldwide Quest

Sponsors and Donors

- Mountain Equipment Co-op
- The Running Room
- Track 'N Trail
- Wildbird General Store

Other Boards and Committees

The following individuals also represent Nature Alberta on various external boards and committees. We thank these people for the additional time and effort they put forth to build and maintain strong relationships with these important partner organizations and initiatives.

- Alberta Conservation Association – Brian Joubert
- Beaver Hills Initiative – Ted Hindmarch
- Endangered Species Conservation Committee – Joseph Hnatiuk and Lu Carbyn
- Prairie Conservation Forum – Andrew Styles



5. We're making good things happen and we're having an impact.

Nature Alberta strives to connect Albertans with the nature all around us in a variety of ways, including connecting with nature clubs across the province and encouraging them to share their data and information, supporting the formation of new natural history clubs, and delivering core programs which encourage Albertans to increase their knowledge and understanding of natural history and ecological processes. Here's a snapshot of where we focused our efforts and what we were able to achieve this past year (April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016).

Birds and Biodiversity

Over the years, much of the attention in this area has been specifically on birds. But this past year, to better reflect the broad spectrum of naturalists and importance of all natural organisms in our province, we have broadened our scope and renamed the “Bird Conservation” program, now calling it the “Birds and Biodiversity” program. Through this program, we aim to connect Albertans to citizen science projects and other events that help them engage with nature, we support conservation of key sites identified in Alberta as critical for biodiversity, and we coordinate the Important Bird and Biodiversity (IBA) program in Alberta. Our focus also includes supporting our member clubs doing important work to protect biodiversity across the province, and finding ways to enhance habitat for biodiversity with the current emphasis being in urban areas.

The newly renamed Birds and Biodiversity program hit the ground running in 2015-2016 hard on the heels of the new partnership with Land Stewardship Centre. With the added capacity afforded us through this partnership, we focused much of our effort on revitalizing and reinvigorating the IBA program in Alberta. In support of this we organized and hosted an IBA workshop in Edmonton. At this workshop we met with 50 individuals including volunteer IBA Caretakers, members of various nature clubs, as well as government representatives to discuss what was needed to help raise awareness for and to get more people out visiting these richly biodiverse areas. One result of the workshop was a follow-up IBA Caretaker webinar, which was requested by several participants, to more clearly outline the role of Caretakers in the province. Overall, 14 people participated in this post-workshop webinar.

Steady and focused activity in these areas has resulted in some significant accomplishments and achievements which include:

- Updating our IBA Caretaker database, and renewing our relationships with and commitment to Caretakers.
- Updating and improving IBA Caretaker information packages.
- Renewing our partnership with Nature Canada.
- Establishing new relationships with different levels of government to begin a process of including IBAs in the land-use planning process.
- Improving our overall management of the IBA program based on direct feedback received from participants of the IBA workshop.

Birds and Biodiversity (continued)

Not only have we been focusing our efforts on revitalizing the IBA program in Alberta, we have also been supporting other crucial partner initiatives in ensuring the health and well-being of wildlife across the province. Nature Canada launched its Cats and Birds Campaign this year and Nature Alberta has stepped up to be a partner of this initiative to ensure the message of Saving Cats and Birds Lives is shared across the province.

We developed approximately 2100 sets of post-card style information cards, identifying the main causes of bird mortality and the best corresponding preventative measures, distributing them to multiple organizations and events across Alberta. During the year we also promoted citizen science events like the Christmas Bird Count, and Nature Alberta was invited to the AEMERA Citizen Science Workshop in early 2016 in response to our active engagement with a variety of citizen science projects, from local to international in scope.

We supported all of these Birds and Biodiversity initiatives by improving content on the Nature Alberta website and e-newsletter, and more proactively using our various social media outlets to help keep our members and others well informed of our activities.

Living by Water

For more than 14 years, Nature Alberta has delivered the Living by Water (LBW) program, which provides information to Alberta's lake residents about healthy shoreline living. Using a structured, onsite property consultation process and targeted outreach the program informs and educates lake shore residents about the importance of maintaining the integrity of the natural ecosystem associated with their lake property, while supporting suitable recreational use, preserving property values and ensuring use for future generations.

In 2015, we modernized our approach to how we deliver the LBW program, enabling us to better support the lakeshore residents we worked with, reduce administrative redundancies and provide higher quality reports and resources. In addition, we worked closely with Alberta Environment and Parks to ensure that our three summer Shoreline Advisors would be up-to-date on invasive species and lakeshore programming offered by the government.

With limited resources, we rely on our community groups, volunteers, and past LBW participants to help spread the word about and promote the LBW program within their communities. 19 community groups and organizations assisted us this year, and as a result of this support our Shoreline Advisors were able to book and conduct 57 first-time property consultations with lakeshore residents at 17 lakes across Alberta. During these on-site property consultations, Shoreline Advisors teach lakeshore residents about the ecology of their lake, discuss any environmental concerns associated with their lake, and talk about how residents can reduce their impact on the lake through small changes they can make on their properties. In follow up, all LBW property consultation participants received a personalized report outlining beneficial

management practices for lakeshore living, and containing additional resources such as Respect our Lake pamphlets, Working Well fact sheets, Alberta Invasive Species Council's invasive species identification brochures, and Alberta Environment and Parks Clean, Drain, Dry materials. Some of the most common beneficial management practices discussed during the consultations and outlined in the reports included:

- Invasive species identification and removal techniques,
- Storm water and runoff management,
- Re-establishing native plant species in areas not being used for recreation such as the shoreline,
- Inspecting docks at the end of the season for invasive species such as zebra and quagga mussels,
- Maintaining septic systems and water wells.

This year we also conducted 10 follow-ups with past LBW shoreline consultation participants who requested another consultation in order to refresh their resources, receive updates on beneficial management practices, and discuss the management practices they had previously put in place. Both initial and follow-up consultations resulted in several participants making direct changes on their properties such as putting water barrels in place to collect rain water, allowing small buffers to form next to the shoreline by avoiding mowing all the way to the water's edge, leaving logs and driftwood in the water for fish and bird habitat, stopping use of fertilizers and pesticides, and using environmentally friendly cleaning products.

In an effort to spread program messages beyond the property consultations, we also spent time attending various events including the Central Alberta Recreation Lakes (CARL) Forum, Red Deer Environmental Fair, CommuniTEA Pond Parties, Emerald Day and events held by numerous stewardship groups throughout the province. Events such as these allowed us to reach more diverse audiences and share the principles of healthy lakeshore living with not only lake residents but also with day users who frequent Alberta's recreational lakes. We connected with attendees at events in several ways including manning display booths, giving presentations, as well as demonstrating our tabletop watershed model which helps people visualize the cumulative effects our everyday activities can have on the water around us.

Nature Kids

Nature Kids is our nature-focused learning program aimed at families with children ages 4-12. We started the Nature Kids program in 2004 with the understanding that children benefit physically and mentally from time spent in nature. Engaging youth in the natural world will help them grow as individuals and develop a strong environmental ethic, enabling them to become future stewards of Alberta's environment.

A significant part of Nature Kids programming is delivered through Nature Kids chapters that have been established in communities around Alberta. These are run by volunteer chapter leaders and supported by the Nature Kids Program Coordinator. There were four active chapters offering Nature Kids programming in 2015-2016 including: Red Deer, Edmonton, Morinville, and Lakeland region. Combined, these four chapters served more than 60 families during the year.

Nature Kids (continued)

Nature Kids chapters engaged families through three core initiatives developed by Nature Alberta for the program and which include the hands on Explorer Day field trips, the home-based learning Action Awards, and NatureWild Magazine.

In addition to the program-based activities, Nature Kids chapters participated in over 20 nature education and outreach events, reaching nearly 1000 Albertans. Building bat boxes on Halloween, snow-shoeing with Alberta Environment and Parks staff in Garner Lake Provincial Park, star gazing with the Lakeland chapter, a canoe trip, and a Christmas bird count at the Kerry Wood Nature Centre are all examples of Explorer Day activities undertaken by Nature Kid chapters this past year.

In an effort to connect and grow our Nature Kids chapter network, we held a workshop for our volunteer chapter leaders at the Land Stewardship Centre office in Edmonton on December 5, 2015. It was a huge hit as chapter leaders were able to network and exchange ideas, and it is something we will replicate in the future.

We want to point out that our Edmonton chapter had its most successful series of Family Nature Night (FNN) events ever. More than 750 people participated in these summer events. The themes for the summer FNN events were: wetlands, birds, forest fables, crawling critters, backyard creatures, and rocks/fossils. We also piloted our first ever winter FNN in February 2016. In a survey distributed to FNN attendees, 70% of respondents reported an overall satisfaction rating of “very satisfied”.

We are grateful for the support of the Alberta Science Network, the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute, and the City of Edmonton Community Recreation Coordinator who collaborated in the planning and execution of the entire Family Nature Night series, and to Alberta Conservation Association for funding Nature Kids and Family Nature Nights. We also wish to extend a special thank you to these particular organizations and the individuals from each who contributed significantly to the success of these events:

- Alberta Lake Management Society and the Hodgson Wetland Stewardship Group experts at the Wetlands FNN.
- Beaverhill Bird Observatory and the Royal Alberta Museum experts at the Birds FNN.
- Root for Trees ran a tree planting station and an interpretive play at the Forest Fables FNN.
- University of Alberta experts at the Crawling Critters FNN.
- Wildlife Rehabilitation Society of Edmonton experts at the Backyard Creatures FNN.
- University of Alberta and Alberta Geological Survey experts at the Rocks and Fossils FNN.
- University of Alberta experts at the Winter FNN.

Communications and Outreach

In 2015, among other things, the partnership with Land Stewardship Centre afforded Nature Alberta the opportunity to begin to communicate with and reach out to key audiences in ways that it has not been able to before. With a dedicated staff person in place, Nature Alberta was able to increase its connection to and engagement with members and other interested individuals significantly. Over the course of the year the Outreach Coordinator focused her efforts on:

- Consistently promoting Nature Alberta programs and initiatives across our social media platforms to increase awareness and participation among members and the public. These initiatives included the Cats and Birds Campaign, Nature Alberta Awards, Nature Alberta’s 45th Anniversary Gala, the Hypo-Half Marathon, the 2015 Emerald Awards, Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas, Nature Kids, Living by Water and Nature Alberta Magazine.
- Researching, curating and posting relevant and interesting content from other sources on all Nature Alberta social media platforms.
- Analyzing Facebook Insights to determine the most popular and most re-shared content, and participating in training and development (via webinars, online resources and books) to learn how to put social media strategies to the best use. Here are a few examples of how we put this knowledge to work:
 - o By re-tweeting this interesting and captivating piece about nature and wildlife in popular media (<http://www.mnn.com/your-home/organic-farming-gardening/stories/7-things-you-never-knew-about-dragonflies>) we reached almost 6,000 people, received 41 likes and had 54 shares.
 - o Retweeting <http://edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/television/alberta-filmmaker-advances-understanding-of-wolverines/> enabled us to reach 10,000 people, receive 54 shares and 69 likes.
 - o Owen Slater Photography often messages Nature Alberta on Facebook and gives his permission to share his amazing wildlife photography. His photo of Bear 22 in Banff National Park, posted on December 7, 2015, is one of our most liked pictures; it received 98 likes and reached 3,000 people.
 - o Our job posting in March for seasonal employees reached 10,000 people, received 24 likes and 74 shares.
 - o When we post information about our core programs, in conjunction with a picture, tagging a partner or tying into news currently in popular media, the response is always positive (high engagement and reach). For example, we posted about the IBA workshop we hosted in November of 2015 and reached 3,000 people, received 28 shares and 17 likes.
 - o Our viewers really like birds! As such, news (especially re-shared from reliable sources such as Bird Studies Canada, Environment Canada, the Cities of Edmonton and Calgary) gets high views. For example: A Cats and Birds Campaign article was featured on CBC News and when shared on our Facebook page, it received 53,888 views.

Communications and Outreach (continued)

- Conducting the Community Visitation Survey with 80% of member clubs and receiving invaluable insight and feedback about Nature Alberta programs and new partnership opportunities. Nature Alberta will take the feedback gathered from the Community Visitation Survey to address gaps in member services, enhance programs, increase community partnerships and ultimately enrich the support provided to our members and member clubs.
- Attending and presenting at numerous events across the province to promote Nature Alberta programs and activities. Events attended included the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance NGO Forum, Running Room Cheque Presentation, The Prairie TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Partner Reception, Clearwater Landcare's "Celebrating our Successes", Synergy Alberta Conference, Alberta Association of Summer Villages Annual Conference, Alberta Emerald Foundation-Emerald Day in Camrose, Alberta Lake Management Society Annual Workshop, Agriculture Service Board Provincial Conference, and the Pembina Climate Summit.
- Researching and posting relevant member club and nature-related events on the Nature Alberta online calendar, which remains the third most viewed/popular webpage on the Nature Alberta website.
- Cross promoting the events and initiatives of more than 40 member clubs and other organizations on all social media platforms.
- Securing donations from four different organizations for prizes for upcoming photo contest. Generous contributions were received from MEC, Wildbird General Store, Track 'N Trail and the Running Room for the spring 2016 photo contest.

In addition to supporting our members, strengthening our relationships with the naturalist community and growing support for our programs, another key purpose of our communications and outreach efforts are to ensure Nature Alberta is viewed as an organization that delivers reliable, relevant, informative and interesting content. Maintaining a strong presence and posting timely and relevant content on Nature Alberta's website and social media outlets (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) helps us do that. Our efforts in this area resulted in significant increases in followers and engagement especially across social media platforms this past year.

- Website users = 3% increase,
- Twitter followers = 31% increase,
- Facebook likes = 23% increase,
- Instagram likes = 125% increase,
- LinkedIn connections = 19% increase (and we rank in the top 42% for profile views among our connections).

Nature Alberta Awards

The Nature Alberta Awards program began in 1976 with the presentation of the very first Loran Goulden Memorial Award. Since then, with the inclusion of four additional awards, Nature Alberta has recognized and honoured the contributions of nearly 100 noteworthy individuals through its annual Awards program. Each of our five awards recognizes individuals for their commitment to the conservation and appreciation of Alberta's natural heritage and/or their support of Alberta's nature clubs. In 2015, we were pleased to present the following awards to some amazing individuals:

Loran L. Goulden Memorial Award – Named for respected Alberta naturalist, Loran L. Goulden, this award is presented to an exceptional individual in recognition of his or her outstanding contributions to natural history in Alberta.

- 2015 Award Recipient – John Acorn

Frank and Alice Harper Memorial Award – This award, named in honor of Frank and Alice Harper, two long-time naturalists, and members of the Lethbridge Naturalists Society, recognizes an individual's unassuming commitment and service to a local nature club, and their efforts to support the betterment, efficiency, administration, operation and fulfillment of the club's mandate.

- 2015 Award Recipient – John McFaul

Honorary Life Member – From time to time, Nature Alberta honors outstanding naturalists or conservationists who have made substantial, life-long contributions to Alberta's naturalist community through their commitment to and volunteer efforts in support of Nature Alberta. In recognition of their long-time efforts and significant impact, these individuals are made Honorary Life Members of Nature Alberta.

- 2015 Award Recipient – Dennis Baresco

Volunteer Award – Each year, Nature Alberta recognizes individuals for their commitment to volunteerism, and for making important contributions that support their local club, Nature Alberta, or other initiatives that benefit Alberta's natural heritage.

- 2015 Award Recipients – Jordan Brown and Michael Rowell

Youth Award – New for 2015, Nature Alberta established this award to recognize the efforts of youth who are active participants in and members of their local nature club. These young individuals demonstrate a passion and appreciation for, and clearly enjoy Alberta's natural history. Their keen interest in learning about Alberta's natural resources and elements of Alberta's wild environment makes them role models that inspire other young naturalists.

- 2015 Award Recipient – David Grinevitch



6. We're pressed by limited resources but rising to the challenge.

As with any not-for-profit organization, we are constrained and challenged by our financial resources. Functioning within a struggling economy, and faced with ever increasing competition for limited operational grants and project funding, this past year we had to be more strategic and more creative than ever before to ensure we can maintain our core programs, and continue the projects and initiatives that are vital to our mission.

As a result of these efforts, our financial outlook is healthier than it has been. We can directly attribute this improved position to three key things. The shared services partnership we entered into with Land Stewardship Centre enabled us to streamline operations, becoming more efficient and cost effective. We implemented a more detailed financial accounting and budget tracking process, which enabled us to better understand our financial position and report on it with certainty. We dedicated considerable effort to strategic fund development and grant writing, which resulted in more successful applications and increased revenues from these sources.

Our plan forward is to build on this momentum, and focus future efforts on not only ensuring we continue to fund core programs and important new projects, but also grow the modest contingency fund we have established in order to help shield our operations from the cyclical and unpredictable nature of restrictive grants and one-off funding sources.

Statement of Financial Position

As at March 31 (Unaudited)

	2016	2015
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
Current		
Cash and cash equivalents	127,530	59,153
Accounts receivable	35,420	16,613
GST recoverable	-	574
Inventory	54,847	70,589
Prepaid expenses	9,090	-
Total current assets	226,887	146,929
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Trade and other accounts payable	268	2,166
Government remittances payable	653	-
Deferred contributions	-	5,873
Total current liabilities	921	8,039
Net assets	225,966	138,890
	226,887	146,929

Statement of Operations

Year ended March 31 (Unaudited)

	2016	2015
	\$	\$
REVENUE		
Bookstore	17,588	8,599
Donations	31,004	21,561
Fundraising events	91,070	-
Grants	157,630	278,186
Memberships	16,027	12,002
Other	1,487	2,134
	314,806	322,482
EXPENSES		
Advertising and promotion	11,610	29,463
Bad debts	570	-
Cost of books sold	17,450	896
Event expenses	8,086	27,000
Insurance	9,175	8,951
Interest and bank charges	885	564
Contract services	92,634	-
Office	6,452	15,298
Professional fees	4,515	8,698
Telephone and utilities	583	923
Travel	18,064	38,199
Wages and benefits	57,705	117,825
	227,729	247,817
Net income for the year	87,077	74,665



7. We're better positioned than ever to take on what comes next.

With such a significant and change-filled year behind us, we now look forward to the coming year, when we will build on what we have achieved using the new capacity and knowledge gained. In addition to our core programs and major projects, we are going to concentrate more of our efforts in two key areas – enhancing member and volunteer relations, and improving our efficiency and accountability as an organization.

We have always known, but realize now more than ever, that our purpose, our strength and our sense of community originates from our members and volunteers – the clubs and the people who are passionate about nature in Alberta. In the coming year, we will be focusing even more time and effort on connecting with our members and volunteers; ensuring we renew and strengthen our relationships with every one of them, and ensuring we deliver clear value to our members and volunteers at a local level.

With the assistance of the Board of Directors, various committees and task teams, we will continue our work to improve how we govern and operate Nature Alberta. This means becoming more efficient and more effective with our information and resources, and better at how we account for and communicate about all that we do.

The path forward will not be without obstacles, and we know there will always be challenges to face. But with a clear focus on our purpose and a renewed commitment to our community, we are better positioned than ever to take on what comes next.



NATURE ALBERTA

A community connected by a love of nature.

www.naturealberta.ca

© 2016 NatureAlberta