



"A community connected by a love of nature."

It's our motto. Our masthead. Our message. Nature Alberta exists to connect and give voice to those with a passion for our province's natural spaces and species, and to encourage this appreciation among the community at large.

This Annual Report, covering the year from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020, provides a picture of an organization approaching its 50th anniversary. It was a time of transition in which we reassessed our goals and strategies, and set out to make the best use of the resources we have to better serve our individual members and our network of member clubs. We enjoyed some genuine successes — and were met with some unprecedented challenges as the initial wave of COVID-19 began to impact club and outreach activities, just as we were all gearing up for them to start in earnest in springtime.

This time of separation has inspired us to become more creative in how we connect and communicate, and to redouble our efforts to be there for our community. We thank all of you for joining us at the outset of our 50th year, and invite you to look ahead with us to the next 50.

Our Vision

Alberta's natural heritage is widely enjoyed, deeply appreciated, and thoroughly protected.

Our Mission

To be a strong voice and an active champion for the greater appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment.

Our Goals

- Goal 1. Build organizational capacity and sustainability
- Goal 2. Support Nature Alberta's member clubs
- Goal 3. Advance nature education and appreciation within Alberta
- Goal 4. Promote nature conservation in Alberta



Nature Alberta provides a unified voice for conservation education and advocacy in Alberta. That collective voice is made up of so many people who share a passion for nature. From our volunteer board, to our dedicated staff, to the membership of clubs who foster that love of nature, to the funders who make our work possible, we gratefully acknowledge the efforts of everyone who contributes to Nature Alberta's ongoing success.

Board of Directors

Appointed Directors

Amy Bergunde (Secretary)

Lu Carbyn (Past President)

Linda Howitt-Taylor (President)

Brian Joubert

Richard Schneider (Vice-President)

Janice Yu (Treasurer)

Elected Directors

Tony Blake – Red Deer River Naturalists

Margot Hervieux – Peace Parkland Naturalists

Claudia Lipski – Buffalo Lake Naturalists

Kim MacKenzie– Alberta Native Plant Council

Ted Nanninga– Lethbridge Naturalists Society

Jennifer Okrainec– Lac La Biche Birding Society

Len Shrimpton– Edmonton Nature Club

Angela Turner– Grasslands Naturalists

Liz Watts – Friends of Elk Island

Staff

Brian Ilnicki, Former Executive Director Richard Schneider, Executive Director Kelsie Norton, Urban Nature Initiative Coordinator

Zoe MacDougall, Nature Kids Coordinator Sheldon Helbert, Living By Water Coordinator Janet Melnychuk, Bookkeeper

Member Clubs

Alberta Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy

Alberta Lake Management Society

Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild

Alberta Mycological Society

Alberta Native Plant Council

Beaver River Naturalist Society

Beaverhill Bird Observatory Society

Big Lake Environment Support Society

Bighill Creek Preservation Society

Buffalo Lake Nature Club

Calgary Area Nestbox Monitoring Society

Calgary Bird Banding Society

Cochrane Environmental Action Committee

Crooked Creek Conservancy Society of Athabasca

Crowsnest Conservation Society

Edmonton Native Plant Society

Edmonton Nature Club

Ellis Bird Farm

Fort Saskatchewan Naturalist Society

Friends of Blackfoot Society

Friends of Elk Island Society

Friends of Little Beaver Lake Society

Friends of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre

Society

JJ Collett Natural Area Foundation

Kimiwan Lake Naturalists

Lac La Biche Birding Society

Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory

Lethbridge Naturalists Society

Little Creeks and Rough Fescue Appreciation

Society

Nature Calgary

Peace Parkland Naturalists

Purple Martin Conservancy

Red Deer River Naturalists

Riverlot 56 Natural Area Society

Society of Grassland Naturalists

Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association

Vermilion River Naturalist Society

Wagner Natural Area Society

Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society

Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship

Society

Funders

Alberta Conservation Association

Edmonton Community Foundation

Government of Alberta

Government of Canada

Land Stewardship Centre

Nature Canada

NWR Sturgeon Refinery

Parkland County

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



When I first joined the Nature Alberta Board of Directors some years ago, I never would have expected to serve as President. But when the time came to take on that role, I set a few personal goals:

- Help make the role of Nature Alberta in relation to its members and member clubs closer and more relevant.
- Bring clarity to the roles and responsibilities of Board members, especially in their capacity as volunteers versus the roles served by staff.
- Visit local clubs and encourage interest in and awareness of the interconnections and responsibilities between clubs and Nature Alberta.
- Encourage an ongoing rotation of representatives to the Board and establish ongoing Board renewal.
- Review and renew our bylaws.
- Encourage increased funding through donations, gifts, and the constant search for grants and other funding sources.
- Encourage and support the work of Board committees. It is through the volunteer work of our committees that a not-for-profit organization such as Nature Alberta can get the essential work completed.
- Promote and "talk up" Nature Alberta to individuals and groups at every opportunity.
- Collaborate with other like-minded organizations and individuals.
- Ask more of myself.

We all value the gift that nature in Alberta has given us. It's time for us to step up to ensure that we



give back to nature through our efforts. This goes beyond participating in field trips and club activities — the fun part. It also means putting the shoulder to the wheel in difficult times, alongside others who share our concern about whether animal and plant species that depend on specific habitats for survival will still be with us tomorrow. That wheel has a dynamic life of its own. In prosperous times, the wheel turns smoothly and envisioning the future seems easy. In challenging times, we are called upon to really consider what we want for future generations.

In planning for the future of Nature Alberta, members of the Board have examined the challenges and opportunities before us, embracing the reality of what this organization can (and cannot) accomplish in a specific time frame. Moments of great excitement come as we discover new ways and means of engaging folks — member clubs and individuals, families and kids, seasoned naturalists and the casually interested.

The founders of the Federation of Alberta Naturalists had a vision when they pulled local clubs and individual efforts together 50 years ago to form what is now known as Nature Alberta. A few of those founders are still with us, and we are profoundly grateful for their efforts. We have a responsibility to continue together with action to further their vision — to promote the understanding and appreciation of how nature turns the wheel for our enjoyment, health, and survival. As nature lovers, we realize that the goal of retaining a healthy natural world for all species is in constant peril of slipping away.

I am stepping down from the position of President this year. It has been a privilege for me to serve for these past three years and to work with dynamic, dedicated staff and volunteers. They have devoted countless hours and boundless energy contributing toward planning, raising ideas, rebuilding Board documents to bring them up to date, and reaching our goals. I also want to thank Dr. Richard Schneider for the gift of his skills and experience as our new Executive Director.

In parting, I leave you with a question to consider: "What can I do to help support and give back to nature?" It is my hope that, now and going forward, the organization of Nature Alberta serves to help guide you to an answer.



This past year has been a period of transition for Nature Alberta, beginning with the development of a new strategic plan. Through the efforts of our strategic planning team we reassessed what we do as an organization and our role in the broader conservation community. Our mission remains the same: to be a strong voice and an active champion for the greater appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment. However, several changes were made to our programs and operational goals to increase our effectiveness as an organization and to raise our profile within the province. Henceforth, Nature Alberta will be more visible and more active as Alberta's voice for nature.

The strategic planning team identified communications as a core strength of Nature Alberta. Our magazine, E-news, website, and social media channels are the main platforms we use to reach the public to achieve our nature education and conservation objectives. Several steps were taken this year to integrate our communications efforts, broaden our reach, and enhance the quality and appeal of the material we provide. This included a revitalization of *Nature Alberta Magazine*, now featuring a fresh and engaging new design and expanded content. It also included a complete rebuild of our website to emphasize three core themes: Learn About Nature, Experience Nature, and Protect Nature. Our aim is to be the leading organization in the province for information on these three themes.

Our relationship with our affiliate nature clubs was also identified as one of our core strengths. We can accomplish much more together than we can apart. To fully capitalize on the potential synergies of the collective, we are launching the new Alberta Nature Network initiative, modeled on Ontario Nature's successful program. The first step was to meet with clubs to explore opportunities and priorities and capture the ideas within a planning framework. Implementation will occur in stages over the coming year.

The Nature Network will incorporate Nature Alberta's existing habitat stewardship initiatives, including the Important Bird and Biodiversity Area program and the Living By Water program. Going forward, habitat stewardship will be an activity that is shared and supported by everyone in the Nature Network, with Nature Alberta serving as a facilitator and coordinator.

The third core strength of Nature Alberta identified by the strategic planning team is our inperson outreach efforts, including the Nature Kids program and the Urban Nature Initiative. Direct interaction with individuals — especially young people — is a powerful way of fostering an interest in nature and recruiting new members to the conservation community. COVID-19 presented special challenges for us this year; nevertheless, we were still able to run some activities and to augment these with virtual experiences.



Another major transition that occurred this year involved the ending of our partnership with the Land Stewardship Centre (LSC). When Nature Alberta was in a difficult spot a few years ago, the LSC stepped in to help, allowing us to share their staff and administrative resources. In addition, the Executive Director at LSC, Brian Ilnicki, began to serve as the Executive Director of Nature Alberta on a part-time basis. Now, with Nature Alberta back on firmer footing, it is time to reestablish ourselves as an independent organization. As the incoming Executive Director, I want to thank Brian and the team at LSC for all of their efforts. Their enthusiasm and hard work over the past few years have positioned Nature Alberta well for the next stage of our journey.

Having now planted many seeds, the coming year promises to be one of strong growth. We have a great team in place, and I look forward to working with them to bring Nature Alberta up to its full potential.



Communications Report

Dublic communication is one of the main ways Nature Alberta advances its mission of educating individuals about Alberta's native species and landscapes and promoting their conservation. This year, several steps were taken to integrate our communications efforts and to broaden their appeal and reach. These efforts were led by the Nature Alberta Communications Committee, composed of staff, board members, and volunteers.

Nature Alberta Magazine is the flagship of our communications program and serves as the primary source for high-quality content for our other communications streams. This year, the magazine underwent a complete overhaul. First, we expanded the range of content, balancing our usual articles on the natural history of selected species with articles on conservation issues and conservation efforts. In parallel, we expanded our network of writers to include field biologists and university researchers, ensuring top-quality, engaging articles. We also increased efforts to source articles from our affiliate clubs, with the aim of raising their profile and highlighting activities they engage in, such as citizen science.

The layout of the magazine was also changed to give it greater visual appeal. High-quality photography is now featured throughout in an engaging design, and the entire magazine is now printed in colour. We also made the decision to make the magazine available on our website, free of charge to everyone. Given the importance of the magazine to our education and conservation mandate, it didn't make sense to keep it locked up behind a pay wall. Readers who still wish to receive a print copy can do so through a subscription, which covers the cost of printing and mailing.

Another major step taken this year was the complete rebuild of our website. The new site will be designed to provide high-quality content on nature-related themes in a format that is easy to navigate and invites deeper exploration. To do this, the new site will be structured around three main themes, borrowed from Nature Canada: 1) Learn About Nature, 2) Experience Nature, and 3) Protect Nature. With this new format, the Nature Alberta website will arguably be the best resource in the province to learn about nature and conservation in Alberta.

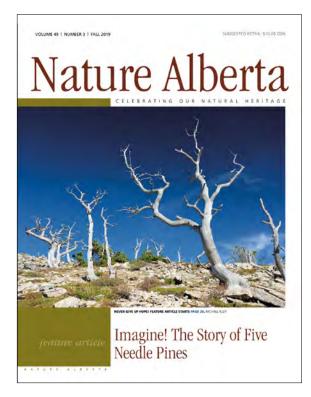
Another important feature of the new website is that it will integrate articles from the magazine, providing an ongoing source of fresh content in a blog-like format. In this way, the top-quality articles written for the magazine will no longer disappear into the archives. Instead, they will form part of a searchable repository of articles available to everyone on the Internet.

The website will also be designed to serve as a hub for the new Nature Network. For example, the Experience Nature section of the website will incorporate the outings, talks, and other events of all



clubs, permitting anyone visiting the site to easily find and participate in activities in their part of the province.

Last, but by no means least, are Nature Alberta's E-news and social media channels. These forms of communication complement the deeper analysis of topics provided by the magazine with smaller and more frequent news items of interest to Alberta's nature community. This form of communication has grown rapidly in recent years and has allowed us to reach a much larger audience than we have in the past. Last year we saw an 11% increase in the number of our social media followers across multiple platforms. Having now revitalized the magazine and website, additional attention will be focused on social media in the coming year, with the aim of maximizing the potential of this important communication tool.







Nature Kids had a busy year, attending many events planned by other organizations as well as hosting many more of our own events.

The Family Nature Night (FNN) events were a huge success again in the summer of 2019, as they have been over the course of the eight years we have been planning and hosting them. We hosted our six summer FNNs as well as our one winter event in 2019–2020. Our six summer themes this year were:

- Wildlife in the City,
- Precious Pollinators,
- Way of the Woods (trees and forests),
- Beautiful Bugs,
- Indigenous Summer, and
- Wet and Wild (water themed).

For the fourth year in a row we hosted a winter FNN and this year's theme was Hibernation. Fortunately, we were able to host it at the end of February before any of the COVID-19 gathering restrictions were put into place.

In 2019, we took on the long-standing Snow Goose Chase from the Edmonton Nature Club, made it our own, and renamed it Celebrating Wildlife. We took families on buses to the Beaver Hills Biosphere to explore Miquelon Lake Provincial Park and learned all about beavers. We followed the snow geese and were able to watch as 6,000–7,000 fed in a field and took flight. And we also had an educational nature walk at the Beaver Hills Biodiversity Trail, where we were fortunate enough to spot a moose and a great horned owl!

Throughout the summer and fall of 2019 and winter of 2020, we also hosted four field trip events for families to discover some National and Provincial Parks of Alberta as well as some Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas near Grande Prairie and Calgary. We partnered with various organizations such as the Peace Parkland Naturalists, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Nature Calgary, and Ducks Unlimited to bring nature education to the families of Alberta. For the second year in a row, we hosted our Women and Girls in Nature events in conjunction with WISEST, but this year we expanded this program to be hosted in five locations instead of two and included one in the winter. We hosted these events in Grande Prairie, Edmonton (one in the summer and one in the winter), Red Deer, Calgary, and Lethbridge.

We hosted numerous Christmas Bird Counts for Kids with funding from Nature Canada through their



NatureHood program and had four classrooms partake in the Project FeederWatch program, in which students collect data about the winter birds that visit feeders in their school yards from November to April.

When not busy attending or planning events, Nature Kids also managed three chapters in Grande Prairie, Edmonton, and Calgary; created articles and activities for the Nature Kids section of Nature Alberta Magazine; and wrote articles for the Nature Alberta e-newsletter.

Overall it was a very successful year and we had a wonderful time interacting with and engaging the families of Alberta!

Event Type	Number	Total Attendees
Celebrating Wildlife (Snow Goose Chase)	1	57
Field Trips	4	118
Family Nature Nights	7	606
WISEST	6	200
Christmas Bird Count for Kids (NatureHood)	3	69
Presentations and Displays	7	N/A
	28	1,050





We would like to thank all the organizations who supported Nature Kids programming, participated at our events, and invited us to participate at theirs:

Alberta Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy (AARC)

Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI)

Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society

Alberta Community Bat Program Alberta Conservation Association

Alberta Forest Products Association - Work Wild

Alberta Institute for Wildlife Conservation

Alberta Parks

Alberta Science Network

Big Lake Environment Support Society Biologists form the University of Alberta

Bow Valley College

Calgary Zoo

Camp Tamarack

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Association

(CPAWS)

Indigenous Cultural Instructors

Edmonton and Area Land Trust

Edmonton Urban Coyote Project

Edmonton Nature Club

EPCOR

Indigenous Cultural Instructors

Milk River Watershed Council

Nature Calgary

Nature Canada

Nature Conservancy of Canada

Nature Lethbridge

Oldman Watershed Council

Peace Parkland Naturalists

Root for Trees

Stantec

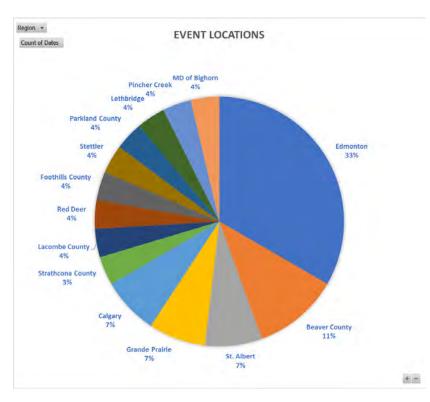
Waterton Biosphere Reserve Association

Women in Scholarship, Engineering, Science and

Technology (WISEST)











Habitat loss and fragmentation are the greatest threats to biodiversity in the world. As urban areas grow, we have a collective responsibility to support and provide habitat for Alberta's flora and fauna. Nature Alberta firmly believes that nature has a purpose and a place within an urban environment.

Our experience with the Keep Cats Safe and Save Bird Lives initiative in Edmonton indicated that many homeowners have an interest in promoting backyard biodiversity but were uncertain about what they could do. With funding from the Edmonton Community Foundation, we were able to address this knowledge gap through our new Urban Nature Initiative (UNI).

Project Goals

The goal of this initiative is to motivate urban homeowners to take action in their yards by encouraging them to implement Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) that support nature and increase biodiversity. If homeowners are encouraged and share their stories, it will create a ripple effect of positive benefits for biodiversity in Edmonton.

Project Outcomes

We are excited to exhibit the online checklist booklet — *Supporting Nature and Biodiversity in Urban Yards* — that is packed full of a variety of BMPs, good yard habits, and additional resources. This checklist will guide homeowners through supporting nature in their yards as well as enable them to create short- and long-term goals. Some examples within the booklet include landscaping for biodiversity, attracting pollinators, and even making bats welcome. The checklist is available online at bit.ly/uni-checklist

Some other components the UNI completed were working directly with ten homeowners throughout Edmonton to create a demonstration site that exemplifies various actions from the booklet. Four videos have been produced that take viewers through the urban homeowners' journeys. These videos will hopefully inspire others to take action in elevating biodiversity in their own yards.

The completed booklet and videos will be featured on Nature Alberta's upgraded website, better connecting Albertans to nature. Additional videos are in progress to provide further demonstrations and "how-to" information for people to create their own biodiverse urban yards.



Summary

- Funded by the Edmonton Community Foundation.
- 10 Biodiverse Demonstration Yards in Edmonton.
- 4 videos produced showcasing the Biodiverse Demonstration Yards.
- Creation of Supporting Nature and Biodiversity in Urban Yards booklet.
- Creation of a new Support Urban Nature page on Nature Alberta's website.

We gratefully acknowledge these organizations for their support of the UNI:

Project Funder: Edmonton Community Foundation

Project Partner: Edmonton Federation of Community

Leagues

Advisory Committee Members:

Alberta Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy

Alberta Community Bat Program

Birds Canada

Edmonton and Area Land Trust

Edmonton Native Plant Society

Edmonton Nature Club

WILDNorth







The Living By Water program took a new direction in 2016, in which recreational lake properties were assessed for their integration or compatibility with the natural environment. Watershed's Canada's Love Your Lake protocol was used for assessing the individual lakeshore properties from a boat. The owners received a report identifying where improvements could be made to make their property more lake friendly. This report was to be the "hook" to encourage them to contact Nature Alberta with the aim of taking the next step to improving the ecological conditions of their shoreline. Part of encouraging lakeshore dwellers to take the next step in improving lakeshore conditions included offering financial incentive, of up to 60%, for those that wished to enhance, restore or naturalize lakeshore conditions.

Four lakes were piloted: Wabamun, Lake Isle, Pigeon, and Lac la Nonne. The best success was on Wabamun and the Lac Ste. Anne County portion of Lac La Nonne. Lake Isle had only two calls expressing interest and neither fit the program's criteria. Considering the tremendous effort our local lake partners at Pigeon Lake Watershed Association (PLWA), the very low show of interest there was disappointing.

Several factors limited the success of the program, including but not limited to logistical issues, our short growing season, provincial regulatory challenges, and inability to reach a large enough segment of the target audience. Even though our call-back rate was close to the 1% observed in Ontario, we have relatively few lakes in Alberta, and so the absolute number of sites we had to work with was quite small. In hindsight, it might have been better to target organizations with properties and activities on these lakes, such as church camps, social clubs, sailing clubs and private commercial enterprises instead of individual property owners. It may have proved easier to organize a larger property involving many people.

The program was able to do what it did by the effort of many, including summer interns Amanda Scoular (2018) and Annakah Stadleweiser (2019). The help of partners in the lake groups, summer villages and counties was greatly appreciated, specifically Krista Quesnel of Parkland County, Lorraine Taylor of Lac Ste. Anne County, Neil Fleming of the Wabamun Watershed Management Council, and Catherine Peirce (present Executive Director) and Susan Ellis (past ED) of the PLWA. Thank you to our suppliers for the discounts they provided: Michael Clarke of Clarke EcoScience, Dawn Watts of Medieval Manor Gardens, and Jordon Voogd of Sunstar Nurseries. Finally, for the efforts of Alex Fredrickson, Kelsie Norton, Kristina Dembriski, Zoe MacDougall, and Brian Ilnicki, who helped in so many ways, a tremendous thank you.





Figure 1. Amount of shoreline planted, in square metres, for each site

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Statement of financial position As at March 31

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
Assets		
Current		
Cash and cash equivalents	290,107	258,948
Accounts receivable	7,373	27,136
Inventory	20,563	20,531
Prepaid expenses	-	13,533
Long-term investments	22,100	10,000
Total current assets	340,143	330,148
Tangible capital assets	4,114	4,790
	344,257	334,938
Liabilities and net assets		
Current		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	23,525	28,538
Government remittances payable	2,572	-
Deferred contributions	99,181	31,747
Total current liabilities	125,278	60,285
Restricted endowment fund	22,100	10,000
Net assets	196,879	264,653
Total	218,979	274,653
	344,257	334,938

Statement of changes in net assets

Year ended March 31

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
Net assets, beginning of year	264,653	272,412
Deficiency of revenues over expenses for the year	-56,974	-7,759
Transfer to restricted endowmnet fund	-10,800	-
Net assets, end of year	196,879	264,653

Statement of changes in net assets

Year ended March 31

	2020	2019
	\$	\$
Revenue		
Bookstore	5,263	8,272
Donations	18,468	23,631
Casino fundraising proceeds	57,201	44,419
Grants	184,049	241,086
Interest income	2,555	245
Memberships	18,334	18,783
Other	14,027	32,944
	299,897	369,380
Expenses		
Advertising and promotion	23,688	14,359
Amortization	1,291	919
Bad debts	368	-
Cost of books sold	-32	32
Event expenses	-	14,436
Insurance	11,840	10,963
Interest and bank charges	1,137	1,408
Land stewardship and contract services	160,025	171,219
Office	57,445	49,962
Professional fees	7,475	5,447
Telephone and utilities	2,783	2,066
Travel	16,232	30,363
Wages and benefits	74,619	75,965
	356,871	377,139
Loss before the following	-56,974	-7,759
Deficiency of revenues over expenses for the year	-56,974	-7,759

