

# Nature Alberta Annual Report

2021-2022

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### Introduction

### "A community connected by a love of nature."

Nature Alberta is the strong voice - of over 1,300 lifetime members and 42 nature clubs - and active champion for the greater appreciation and conservation of nature in Alberta. This Annual Report, covering the year from November 1, 2021 to October 31, 2022, illustrates a community connected by a love of nature. We gathered together to celebrate Nature Alberta's achievements over the past 50 years and launched the organization into the next 50 years of success. Following the revitalized Strategic Plan, even greater support was committed to the Nature Network. Operating collaboratively, we increased the appreciation of nature through all aspects of our work with highlights including the broadcasting of the Nature Network Speaker Series to Albertan nature enthusiasts; delivering positive, hands-on nature experiences to families at events across the province; and publishing another 4 inspiring and informative issues of Nature Alberta Magazine. Educating Albertans on local environmental issues and species conservation equips the public with the knowhow to actively conserve nature through inspired actions all the way from influencing policy changes down to creating habitat in our own backyards. We thank all of you for joining us in appreciating nature, protecting our natural spaces and species, and passing on our immense shared passion to a new generation of naturalists and conservationists.

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





Nature Alberta provides a unified voice for conservation education and advocacy in Alberta. That collective voice is made up of 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.

#### 2022 Board of Directors

Kim MacKenzie	President
Lu Carbyn	Vice President
Jim Donohue	Treasurer
Erin McCloskey	Secretary
Liz Watts	Past President
Tony Blake	Director
Gillian Chow-Fraser	Director
Shane Hammell	Director
Margot Hervieux	Director
Linda Howitt-Taylor	Director
Kaya Konopnicki	Director
Claudia Lipski	Director

#### Staff

Richard Schneider, Executive Director Stephanie Weizenbach, Program Director Abigail Stosky, Program Coordinator Susan May, Communications Director Jason Switner, Magazine Managing Editor Jennifer Brownridge, Bookkeeper



#### **Member Clubs**

Alberta Amphibian and Reptile Conservancy Alberta Lake Management Society Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild Alberta Mycological Society Alberta Native Bee Council Alberta Native Plant Council Alix Nature Trail Society Beaverhill Bird Observatory Society Big Lake Environment Support Society **Bighill Creek Preservation Society** Boreal Avian Research & Conservation Association Buffalo Lake Nature Club Calgary Area Nestbox Monitors 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 Jasper National Park Friends of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre Society Grasslands Naturalists Society JJ Collett Natural Area Foundation Kimiwan Lake Naturalists Lac La Biche Birding Society Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory Lethbridge Naturalists Society Nature Calgary Peace Parkland Naturalists

Purple Martin Conservancy of Canada Red Deer River Naturalists Riverlot 56 Natural Area Society Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association Vermilion River Naturalist Society Wagner Natural Area Society Wainwright Wildlife Society Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society Wizard Lake Watershed and Lake Stewardship Association

#### **Funders**

A. Lawrence Berry Family Environment Fund Alberta Conservation Association Alberta Culture Edmonton Community Foundation Environment and Climate Change Canada Nature Canada Northwest Red Water Partnership TD Friends of the Environment Foundation



### **Executive Director Report**

Richard Schneider exec@naturealberta.ca

In April of 2022, Nature Alberta completed a new 3-year strategic plan. The organization's four core goals remain unchanged: (1) advance nature education and appreciation within Alberta, (2) promote nature conservation in Alberta, (3) support Nature Alberta's member clubs, and (4) build organizational capacity and sustainability. But our programs and activities continue to evolve as we seek to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible in pursuit of these goals.

In the new strategic plan, our operations are divided into three integrated program areas: public outreach, the Nature Network, and organizational sustainability. The outreach program is directed toward the general public and delivers nature education and promotes nature appreciation and conservation across Alberta.

Our flagship outreach program is Nature Kids, which provides hands-on, nature-related experiences for families. 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. With the continued loosening of Covid restrictions, we were able host seven in-person Family Nature Nights this year and expand the program outside of Edmonton. These events were attended by 816 parents and kids. Additional details on the Nature Kids program are provided in the Public Outreach report.

Nature Alberta also engages in extensive outreach online. These efforts are organized around three core themes: "Learn About Nature," "Experience Nature," and "Protect Nature." We reach the public through our digital magazine (also available in print form), social media channels, electronic newsletter, and website. The magazine is a high-quality publication featuring natural history articles on Alberta's wildlife and in-depth analysis of conservation issues written by field biologists, university researchers, and other experts. Our website and social media posts deliver content from the magazine as well as information on nature-related events and guidance on engaging and protecting nature on a personal level. More information is provided in the Online Outreach report.

Besides delivering educational content, our public outreach program is used to raise awareness of important conservation issues and deliver calls to action. Some of the issues we engaged in over the past year include the protection of species at risk, the proposed expansion of irrigation in southern Alberta, coal mining in the Eastern Slopes, the expansion of forest harvesting, the new Red Tape Reduction Act, the new Trails Act, invasive species, and various local issues. Together with other conservation organizations, we encouraged individuals from across the province to write to the government about their concerns with issues.

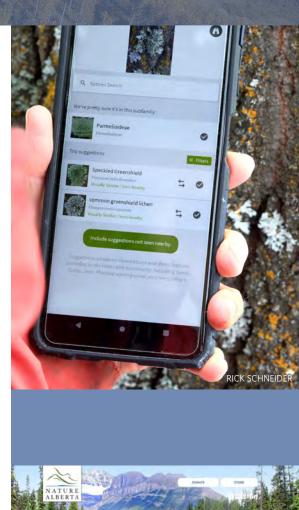


Our second program area is the Nature Network, which is primarily intended to support Alberta's naturalist community. The Network consists of 42 nature clubs located across the province along with over 1,300 individual members of Nature Alberta itself. Each club has a designated liaison who communicates directly with our Program Director about club activities and concerns. Through the Nature Network, Nature Alberta provides a wide range of services to Alberta's naturalist clubs and their members. An example is the province-wide Nature Network speaker series hosted on Zoom. Additional details are provided in the Nature Network report.

The Nature Network is also where our citizen science and Important Bird Areas programs are housed. There is extensive overlap between these programs, the activities of nature clubs, and the interests of the broader naturalist community. Coordination of these interrelated efforts through the Nature Network provides important synergies and increased effectiveness.

Over the past year, our engagement in citizen science increased significantly. To start, we expanded the citizen science section of our website, such that it now serves as a central hub for citizen science projects across the province. We also helped coordinate specific projects and engaged heavily in the promotion of citizen science in general through public presentations, magazine articles, and social media posts.

Our final program area is organizational sustainability. Efforts here were focused on growing our membership, growing our volunteer network, and diversifying our funding base. Membership continues to grow rapidly, increasing by 24% over the past year to 1,304 members. Growth of our supporters, defined as individuals that sign up to receive



#### **Citizen Science**

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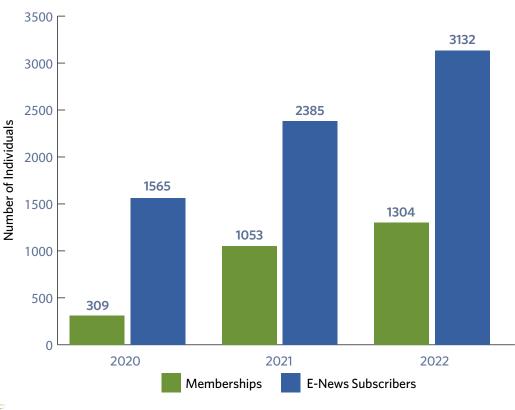


Annual Report 2021–2022



our electronic newsletter and other communications, has been even faster. Our base of supporters increased by 31% over the past year to 3,132 individuals. Supporters receive the same communications as members and serve as an important body for our education and conservation outreach efforts and for funding appeals.

In terms of finances, the past year was a difficult one because our casino was delayed by over one year — to Aug. 2022 — as a result of Covid closures. This left a sizable hole in our budget, given that gaming revenue normally provides a significant, dependable source of funding for us. Fortunately, having been forewarned about the casino delay, we were able to stretch other forms of funding to tide us over without reducing operations.



#### Membership and E-News Mailing List Growth

NATURE Annual Report 2021–2022



On a more positive note, we made amazing progress in growing our endowment fund over the past year. Nature Alberta's endowment is held with the Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF) and we view it as a critical contributor to long-term organizational stability. Once large enough, the endowment will generate a steady stream of unrestricted income, reducing our reliance on foundation grants that must be applied for anew each year.

The key to the endowment's rapid growth has been ECF's matching program. In 2021, the ECF offered 2:1 matching for any funds Nature Alberta contributed, up to a limit of \$50,000. To capitalize on this offer, the board authorized the allocation of \$25,000 from our reserve fund as matching dollars for a donor appeal in the fall of 2021. As a result of these matching commitments, every dollar contributed by donors generated \$6 in the endowment fund (\$1 donation + \$1 Nature Alberta matching + \$4 ECF matching). This high level of matching proved to be highly successful in motivating donations. Through an online auction and online appeals to our members (Covid precluded in-person events) we raised over \$25,000. After matching, this translated into \$150,000 growth of our endowment.

In 2022, the ECF offered 1:1 matching for endowment contributions, lower than the previous year, but still highly beneficial. The board again approved the allocation of matching funds from Nature Alberta's reserve fund and we were again able to raise \$25,000 in donations. This time, the bulk of the funds were raised at an in-person fundraising event held in September 2022, belatedly celebrating Nature Alberta's 50th anniversary. Large donations by Lu Carbyn (\$5,000) and Joanne McDonald (\$2,000) at the event helped to encourage other attendees to donate. With the new donations plus Nature Alberta and ECF matching, the endowment now holds just over \$320,000.

In closing, I want to extend my thanks and appreciation for the important contributions that volunteers have made to Nature Alberta over the past year. These individuals and organizations donate their time, expertise, and financial support, making our work possible. This year, we developed a formal volunteer network, supported by a web-based volunteer recruitment system, volunteer stewardship protocols, and appropriate administrative tools. Details on this program are provided in the Volunteer Network report.





### **Nature Network Program Report**

Steph Weizenbach info@naturealberta.ca

In 2022, Nature Alberta added even more benefits to strengthen the support of the Nature Network of 42 nature clubs across the province. Benefits of Nature Alberta club membership include:

- 1. An online club forum and monthly updates through the Nature Network News
- 2. Network library filled with valuable resources
- 3. Promotion of clubs and events to a wide audience
- 4. A shared Zoom account at no additional cost
- 5. The Nature Network Speaker Series
- 6. An online photo library
- 7. Volunteer and job recruitment support

- 8. Support for citizen science initiatives
- 9. Support for stewardship and advocacy initiatives
- 10. An opportunity to participate in an affordable group insurance program
- 11. The ability to partner on grant applications requiring charitable status
- 12. A print copy of the Nature Alberta Magazine

To effectively maneuver all of these great resources, Nature Alberta continuously updates the *Nature Alberta Member Club Manual*. The 2022 manual included an offer of free lifetime Nature Alberta membership to all member club members. This initiative added 60 individuals to our membership in 2022. Clubs were offered free resources including books and pamphlets to provide to members, volunteers, and public to raise awareness for environmental conservation issues.

The 2021-2022 Nature Network Speaker Series was a wild success broadcasting 14 educational Zoom presentations on a variety of environmental topics to 1,189 total live audience. Presenters were recruited and featured by 8 Member Clubs with Nature Alberta to be shared with the entire

Nature Network and the general public. The series included our first ever Nature Alberta Chit Chat where presenters told their story in a Pecha Kucha style, with John Acorn, Nature Alberta's Patron, as the keynote storyteller. Many presentations were recorded and continue to reach even more people through our <u>Nature Network Speaker Series playlist</u> on YouTube where the available videos collectively have over 1,000 views.







Thank you to all the Nature Network Speaker Series presenters who volunteered their time to share their knowledge and stories with us, including:

Brenda Dale	Erin Bayne	Jennifer Howse	Myrna Pearman
Christy Morrissey	Geoff Holroyd	John Acorn	Richard Schneider
Colleen Cassady St.	Gerald Romanchuk	Laureen Echiverri	Sean Campbell
Clair	Heather Addy	Martin Osis	Steph Weizenbach
Dale Leckie	Janice Hurlburt	Melissa Penney	Wes Olson
Dave Ealey		•	

Nature Alberta focused particular support on promoting and coordinating citizen science initiatives. A citizen science webpage on the naturealberta.ca site is now packed full of information about the purpose of citizen science, how to get involved, and a growing list of projects individuals can contribute to everywhere in Alberta. We worked with volunteers to revamp Nature Alberta's May Species Count to facilitate the submission of the collected data to eBird and iNaturalist databases, contributing research grade observations. Nature Alberta took on leadership of the BiodiverCity Challenge, a four-day BioBlitz in June that was initiated in 2020 by Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute after the sunsetting of NatureLynx. The BiodiverCity Challenge has spread to include not only all of Alberta, but many other western provinces and northern states. Stay tuned for an inclusive name change for 2023!

Nature Alberta continues to act as the regional coordinator for the Important Bird Area Caretakers, actively recruiting and supporting volunteers and Member Club representatives to complete bird surveys and contribute to federal assessments of these areas for consideration for Key Biodiversity Area criteria.

Nature Alberta collaborated with the Edmonton Nature Club to form the Bird Friendly Edmonton Team. The Team completed an application that resulted in Edmonton being awarded Entry Level Bird Friendly Certification.





### **Online Outreach**

communications@naturealberta.ca

N ature Alberta's mission is to be "a strong voice and an active champion for the greater appreciation and conservation of Alberta's natural environment." We advance this mission through a public outreach program that celebrates our natural heritage, educates Albertans about native species and ecosystems, and raises awareness of conservation issues. These are the building blocks of public caring and engagement, which ultimately drive environmental policy. We saw this clearly demonstrated last year when Albertans engaged en masse to push back on proposals to delist provincial parks and expand coal mining in sensitive parts of the Eastern Slopes, forcing the government to rescind its plans.

The flagship of our outreach program is *Nature Alberta Magazine*, available in print form by subscription and in digital form on our website (at no charge). The magazine is a high-quality, full-colour publication providing informative and engaging articles on all aspects of nature in Alberta. Over the past year we have published natural history articles on a wide variety of species (from bugs to bison), provided in-depth analysis of important conservation issues, taken readers into the field with research scientists, shared images and stories from leading wildlife photographers, and much more. There is also a Nature Kids section in every issue. The feature articles are written by field biologists, university researchers, and expert naturalists keen to share their knowledge and their passion for nature.

Magazine readership continues to grow, and is now over 1,800 readers per issue. We have also begun selling the magazine, on a cost-recovery basis, at four stores (in Edmonton, Calgary, and Spruce Grove). Through the generous financial assistance of Bob Morgan, this year we have been able to provide free promotional copies of the magazine to 30 public libraries, which generated 15 new subscriptions. This promotional program is now being extended to Edmonton public schools and if the response is favourable, we will approach other school districts in the future.

We also reach the public through several social media platforms and an electronic newsletter. We use these platforms for shorter, more frequent posts on nature-related events and presentations hosted by Nature Alberta, our member clubs, and other nature organizations. This is also where we post news about pressing conservation issues, including calls for public action. Over the past year, our followers on Facebook have increased from 9,095 to 9,839. In the same period, our E-news subscriptions increased by over 30%, from 2,385 to 3,132.

The final pillar of our online outreach program is our website, which was completely rebuilt in the fall of 2020. The website is organized around three main themes: Learn About Nature, Experience Nature, and Protect Nature. Much of the content is derived from the magazine and our social media posts; therefore, repeat visitors always find something new. The site also provides kid-friendly nature





#### Nature Alberta Magazine online

activities and opportunities for experiencing nature, protecting urban nature, citizen science, local nature clubs, and much more. On average over the past year, the website was visited by approximately 15,000 people per month.

In addition to *Nature Alberta Magazine* and online outreach, Nature Alberta also runs an in-person outreach program. This is described in the Public Outreach report.

#### Magazine content contributors in 2022

Ashley Hillman		
Celine Ibsen		
Dale Leckie		
Dick Dekker		
Doris May		
Erin McCloskey		
Garrett Rawleigh		
Gillian Chow-Fraser		

Heather Addy Jack Waller Jay White John Acorn Laura Southwell Lawrence Harder Lee Hecker Lorne Fitch Lu Carbyn Margot Hervieux Mark Lund Megan Edgar Myrna Pearman Nancy Mahoney Nick Carter Rick Price

Sonya Richmond Stephanie Chute-Ibsen Tim Schowalter Valerie Miller Victoria Van Mierlo Wes Olson







### **Public Outreach**

Steph Weizenbach info@naturealberta.ca

Winter 2021 through fall 2022, Nature Alberta's Nature Kids program produced engaging virtual materials including Do-It-Yourself Activities, Fun Facts, Big Alberta Backyard Articles, and a new publication: Saskatoon Lake Migratory Bird Sanctuary Guide. Through the Conservation Engagement and Education Blitz project, we collaborated with Medicine Hat Interpretive Program, Boys and Girls Club Lethbridge, and Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society to enrich ongoing programming to inspire the next generation of naturalists.

Nature Alberta led a variety of popular in-person programs including Christmas Bird Counts 4 Kids in two cities, World Migratory Bird Day Festival, Tree Planting for BiodiverCity, seven Family Nature Nights, and an array of nature walks, presentations, and information booths. This was our second year hosting a Family Nature Night in Red Deer and first year hosting one in Calgary. Calgary participants came out in force with the highest attendance of the 2022 series with 175 attendees! One Family Nature Night took on a festival theme to accommodate the exploration of Big Lake at the Lois Hole Centennial Provincial Park where participants filled in a passport at six nature education stations to become Wetland Champions! Themes for the seven events included:



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When asked what their absolute favourite part of the Family Nature Night event, anonymous participants responded:

We loved all of it and both learned things (parent and child)! ... It was such a fun night and we are so glad we were able to come to it!

- Incredible Ecosystems Family Nature Night Parent Attendee

My son's excitement over all the great stations and watching his face light up as he learned about amphibians, reptiles, birds and plants in the wetlands.

- Wetland Champions Family Nature Night Parent Attendee











It was a great opportunity for Nature Calgary to connect with the families that came out to the event. It was a perfect opportunity to make the kids aware of the joy and fun of bird watching while at the same time delivering a message of the importance of birds in our environment and the need to protect their habitat.

— John McFaul, Nature Calgary President

Over the spring and summer, we have used many of the resources that [Nature Alberta] provided us as giveaways or handouts for many of our events. According to our rough tally, we have directly reached around 85 different individuals. Indirectly, this will be more as families use the resources with other groups or spread information about the Nature Hero's program. We are currently revamping our school programs. The aquatic nets and the rock testing supplies will be incorporated into these newly developed programs. ... These resources will help provide a more hands-on, authentic learning experience for the students. As these items can be used multiple times, we hope to continue to use these program resources over the next few years

— Ian Langill, Assistant Chief Interpreter, Medicine Hat Interpretive Program

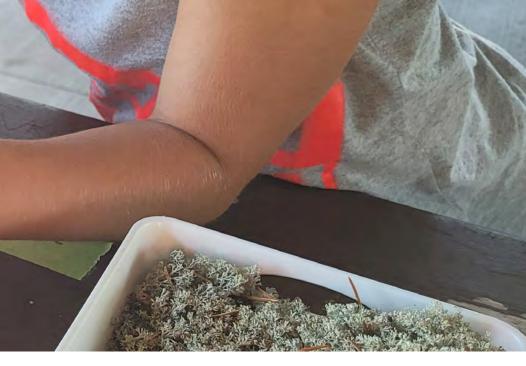
The joy in the crowd was evident from the expressions as I looked out at the groups I was speaking to and in the enthusiastic questions I received by families that slowly trickled out of the park after the events completion. They were slow to leave as they wanted to continue to engage in the learning opportunities that your event had created. They were smiling from the time they arrived to register until the families trailed back out of the park and the end of the event. ....

This was an excellent opportunity for learning, encouraging stewardship and a curiosity for the natural world around us for the participants. As an educator at the Family Nature Night, this was an excellent event that encouraged continued collaboration and community building between different organizations and individuals in the city enthusiastic and knowledgeable about our ecosystems and organisms

— Dylan Golbeck, Naturalist, Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society



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### We would like to thank all the organizations who collaborated with us to deliver our Nature Kids programming:

Alberta Amphibians and Reptile Conservancy

Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas – Water **Projects Management** Alberta Fish and Wildlife Alberta Lake Management Society Alberta Science Network Backyard Birds Nature Shop Beaverhill Bird Observatory Big Lake Environment Support Society Cold Lake Fish Hatchery Edmonton Nature Club Edmonton Native Plant Society Future Energy Systems MacEwan University Kerry Wood Nature Centre

Medicine Hat Interpretive Program

Medicine River Wildlife Centre Mills Haven Elementary School Nature Calgary Nature Canada Nature Central North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance Park Plaza Daycare Centre Red Deer River Naturalists Root for Trees The Wild Bird Store University of Alberta Wagner Natural Area Society Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society Wildbird General Store







### **Volunteer Team Report**

Steph Weizenbach info@naturealberta.ca

N ature Alberta's success is largely due to the tireless efforts and contributions of many volunteers. To help coordinate these generous contributions, Nature Alberta officially launched the Nature Alberta Volunteer Team early in 2022. Volunteers can now view opportunities to contribute to Nature Alberta's initiatives as well as Nature Network opportunities all across the province on the <u>Volunteer</u> <u>& Job Board</u>. Since the launch of the Volunteer & Job Board in late 2021, 55 conservation related job and volunteer opportunities have been shared and the webpage has received 6,094 visits. Highlights of upcoming opportunities are sent directly to the Volunteer Team's inbox through the monthly Volunteer Dispatch. To enhance training of Nature Kids event volunteers, we developed the Family Nature Nights Volunteer Manual. Volunteers were appreciated through many thanks, small gifts, and a special Volunteer Appreciation Nature Walk event.

I have been a volunteer with Nature Alberta since the summer of 2021, and I have thoroughly enjoyed working with them on various projects and events the entire time. As a freelance writer, photographer, and educator focused heavily on Alberta's natural history, I've been given ample opportunities to follow my interests and develop my skills to help enrich Nature Alberta's mandate of spreading knowledge and awareness of nature in this province.

- Nick Carter, Nature Alberta Volunteer



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### **Volunteer Dispatch**



Updates and Opportunities for our Volunteer Community







### Financial Statements of NATURE ALBERTA for the year ended

March 31, 2022

M Mar Harrison

<b>Statement of financial position</b> As at March 31, 2022		
	2022	2021
	\$	\$
ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Cash	\$201,757	\$230,191
Accounts receivable	9,681	2,740
Inventory	16,882	20,563
Prepaid expenses	817	_
	229,137	261,494
EQUIPMENT	2,347	3,100
	231,484	264,594
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	21,137	13,820
Deferred contributions	15,841	50,122
	36,978	63,942
NET ASSETS		
Invested in equipment	2,347	3,100
Unrestricted	192,159	197,552
	194,506	200,652
	\$231,484	\$264,594



#### Statement of changes in net assets Year ended March 31, 2022 2022 2021 Invested in Unrestricted equipment \$ \$ **NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR** \$200,652 \$135,680 \$3,100 \$197,552 Revenue over (under) expenses (5,393 64,972 (753) (6,146) NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR \$2,347 \$192,159 \$194,506 \$200,652



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### Statement of operations

Year ended March 31. 2022

	2022	2021
	\$	\$
REVENUE		
Grants	\$95,358	\$167,834
Donations	55,849	24,329
Funds from 2019 casino	30,738	44,690
Fees for club services and other	30,523	8,070
Memberships and club insurance fees	17,792	20,173
Bookstore	14,853	10,250
Interest income	2,237	86
	247,350	275,432
EXPENSES		
Employee wages and benefits	94,899	54,658
Endowment contribution	61,250	2,000
Contracted services	34,483	93,895
Advertising and promotion	13,671	7,320
Insurance	12,773	12,995
Professional fees	12,635	10,236
Program costs	11,471	5,937
Office	8,639	16,275
Interest and bank charges	1,498	1,085
Travel	943	3,606
Amortization	753	1,013
Telephone and utilities	339	583
Bad debts	142	857
	253,496	210,460
REVENUE OVER (UNDER) EXPENSES	\$(6,146)	\$64,972





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