

2017 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Submitted by Tony Blake January 25, 2018

Each year it's the President's job to look back and remember the events and accomplishments of the last year. Although it seemed like a fairly normal year to me, after I looked through our minutes and newsletters, I was still amazed at how much went on. I could say that this organization does a lot of things in one year, but the truth is a lot of people do a lot of things for this organization over the course of the year. Sometimes we feel tired and discouraged because we didn't accomplish as much as we wanted. That's the time to realize how much individual volunteers really do for the RDRN, each doing what they can in their own special way. This is very much a bottom-up, volunteer-driven organization, and we can be very proud of that.

Thank you to my Directors not only for coming to meetings, but for all the extra things you do. You realize how much we depend on people who see a need and volunteer their time to meet it. I want all our Members and Supporters to realize how much we need them to step forward. **Who do we need?** Anyone who cares about the natural world, willing to work and learn. **What do we need?** If you have any skill or interest in governance, office management, education, monitoring, advocacy, or specific projects we can put it to use. **What kind of time commitment?** It all depends on the volunteer. Even coming out once a year for a species count is a significant contribution. **Why volunteer?** Because we can. It needs to be done. It's OUR natural heritage and no one else will appreciate it as much as we do. It's good for the world, if we can't save the world, we can still change peoples' attitudes. It's good for RDRN, by showing we care, we motivate and enable each other. It's good for YOU: new friends; new knowledge; and new opportunities.

2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

FOCUS ON NATURAL HISTORY

Flower Focus: Don Wales organizes monthly presentations on botany and natural history. March/17 - Don W - Lilies; April/17 - Caroline Harris - Death Valley Superbloom; May/17 - Bill Heinsen - Distribution of arctic wildflowers; June/17 field trip; Oct./17 - Caroline Harris - Flowers of the Yukon; Nov./17 - Don W - Flowers of Glacier National Park Montana; Dec./17 - Don W - Christmas Flowers, Weird and Wonderful. In 2018 Don plans to shift the emphasis from botany to entomology.

Bird Focus: Keith Kline schedules and leads weekly birding walks on Saturdays from April to June and August to December. Birding destinations for 2017 included: Bower Woods, Kin Canyon, River Bend, Slack Slough, Springbrook Wetland, Hazlett Lake, NOVA boardwalk at Joffre, the College woods, Maskepetoon Park, Michael O'Brien Ponds, Fort Normandeau. Walks went on until the beginning of December/17 and ended with a wrap up cake and coffee in the RDRN boardroom (thanks Keith!). Birding walks will resume again in April 2018. In order to celebrate Canada's 150th birthday Keith's special project was to have the group identify 150 bird species. I believe they reached 150 by July 1st and kept on counting. The total birds counted for the year was 183.

City and Rural Birding Trail: (Judy Boyd and Doug Pedersen) These well-researched maps allow locals and visitors alike to become familiar with some of the best places to observe different species. The Birding Trail website is kept up to date and all data

has been backed up to an online Dropbox. Doug & Judy have been working on revisions to the maps and looking for ways to get them reprinted. The number of maps to print will depend on our 2018 budget and whether we can find a sponsor.

OUTREACH, EDUCATION, ADVOCACY AND PROJECTS

2017 Speaker Series: Sally Stuart is our new Coordinator, taking over from Myrna Pearman, who brought us dozens of fascinating presentations over the past years. Meetings start at 7:30 PM with sightings and announcements before the coffee break. Speaker starts at 8:00 PM. Last year's speakers were: February - K. Ruckstuhl: Bighorn Sheep; March - C. Olson: Backyard bats; April - I. Wilson and J. Levoie - Waterton Wild; September - J. Higgins: Alberta Aquatic Invaders; November - Bradly Peters: Lake Management. Thanks to Bob Kruchten, Rod Trentam, and Bev French for making sure speaker nights always go smoothly. Thanks also to Phil French for choosing and setting up a new laptop computer and AV cart for meeting presentations.

2017 Events: May - May species count - coordinated by J. Boyd; June - Ferry Point Campout - coordinated by J. Boyd. This was the seventh annual community event on the Battle river, Turkey Vultures, birding and botanizing on the Bjorge property. RDRN contributed \$200 to the evening barbecue; Fall Banquet - tickets went on sale at the September meeting for \$30. Don Wales booked the Pioneer Lodge. Dr. Lu Carbyn was the speaker and the meal was catered by Blue Sage. This was our first October banquet and so far the feedback has been positive. Setting it back a month makes it much easier to organize. December - Christmas bird count coordinated by J. Boyd. Central Alberta Science Fair given \$200 for prizes.

2017 Owl Award: The 2017 Owl Award went to Dorothy Hazlett. Unfortunately Dorothy passed away before she could receive it. Geoff and Delaine Hazlett accepted for her at the Fall banquet.

Media: **Newsletter** - edited by Myrna Pearman, Judy Boyd, Sally Stuart. It is published nine times a year with local stories, event notifications and wildlife photography. **Website** - Susan and Elissa are doing a great job of keeping the RDRN website up to date. **Facebook page** - managed by Bill Heinsen, just keeps getting better, more stories, photos and breath-taking trail-cam videos from Don Auden. **Twitter:** - managed by Susan V. **Event Posters** - professionally produced by Doug Pedersen.

STEWARDSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS

Ellis Bird Farm: Judy Swartz is our new representative to the EBF Board, replacement for Bonnie Mullen.

Nature Alberta: RDRN is a founding member of Nature Alberta (NA). NA provides liability insurance, Nature Kids program (YNC), Living by Water program, and a quarterly magazine. Note that free Nature Alberta magazines are available to registered RDRN members. NA is also pursuing new ideas for improving demographics and money making ventures - e.g., Pacific coast pelagic birding tour, Namibia tour. The staff-sharing partnership with Land Stewardship Centre is going well. A joint workshop with NA and LSC directors was held in September. Linda Howitt Taylor from Alix, Alberta is the new NA president, taking over from Lu Carbyn last October 2017.

Waskasoo Environmental Education Society: Don Wales is our representative on their board of Directors. WEES will be able to put the Birding Trail Maps at the Tourism Centre in Red Deer.

PCRAP: (Piper Creek Restoration Agriculture Project) (Tony Blake, Elissa Odgren Rene Michalak). Pollinator, permaculture,

tree planting workshops; Garlic City Market, Fall Harvest Supper, and "meet the goats" day; collect stream temperature data with automatic loggers (Tony); collected, planted, and maintained 80 willow cuttings along Piper Creek (Tony); select, plant, mulch, fence, weed nursery stock for permaculture "food forest;" spring & summer volunteer opportunities: mapping, marking, monitoring, weed control, trimming; riparian planting events with AWES (Alberta Woodlot Extension Service); bio-control release site for toadflax eating weevils (City of RD); Elissa took the six-day permaculture course; Rene got his grant. RDRN has to put in \$7,400.00 worth of volunteer hours; - pollinator garden was put in by Cynthia Pohl; monitor and control riparian invasive species (Tony); old barn removed, working on design and funding for a replacement structure; Oct. workshop about tree planting in the riparian zone with Olds College and Jr. Forest Wardens.

Red Deer College: RDRN contributes an annual scholarship of \$1,500.00.

Rocky Mountain Eagle Research Foundation: is followed closely by Doug Pedersen.

Bounty Watch: was looking for financial support for Dr. Gilbert Proulx's predator study. We can only ask for individual donations from Members if interested. Unfortunately this doesn't qualify for Casino funds.

Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) ACA's Grant Eligible Conservation Fund gives out \$2M every year. Tony served on the 2017 committee to select recipients. RDRN made a \$1,400.00 donation to help the ACA purchase the Porter property on the Raven River west of Spruceview.

Medicine River Wildlife Centre: We sent a letter of recommendation for MRWC to Community Facility Enhancement Program. RDRN made a \$1,200.00 donation to MRWC's building fund.

Alberta Weed Regulations Advisory Committee: Stakeholders meet to discuss provincial policy on invasive plants. Tony represents conservation NGO's.

Alberta Lake Management Society: RDRN donated \$200 to help them buy monitoring equipment.

HABITAT ADVOCACY, ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

River Bend: Don Wales approached the City regarding spruce forest removed to make way for the Winter Games.

Provincial gravel review: Tony and Dale Christian attended a two-day meeting in Airdrie. This was a rare chance to address the AB government on gravel mining in riparian zones. Tony will forward info to anyone who is interested.

Hazlett Lake MASP: The lake has been disconnected from its input and output. City has amended the area structure plan to allow development. RDRNer's want a biophysical study done before any development goes ahead, as recommended by the city's engineering consultant. RDRN members addressed City Council in August.

Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary Committee: Judy Boyd attended a meeting on July 27 to discuss Invasive Weed Management, Paving, June storm damage to trees.

Slack Slough: Judy Boyd communicated with Bob Mills who owns property by the slough. He has proposed a wildlife habitat reserve that would connect with the Red Deer trail system. He will be looking for species data on birds & plants in the spring.

Lacombe Lake/Blackfalds Lake: Tony attended Lacombe County townhall meeting regarding Blackfalds's proposal to dispose of urban stormwater in these watersheds.

Turkey Vultures: Bev French approached ATCO to remove a hazardous power pole near Three Hills. ATCO removed it.

Butcher Creek Natural Area: needs a steward to replace Bill Heinsen.

GOVERNANCE AND SUPPORT

RDRN Policy Manual: Judy B., Elissa O. and Susan V. worked on RDRN's Standard Operating Procedures manual.

RDRN Bylaws: The board held a special meeting on August 29, 2017 to work on revising the RDRN's bylaws to satisfy the AGLC requirements for using casino funds. Our bylaws must specify exactly where our assets will be disbursed upon dissolution; charitable or religious groups or purposes; or transferred in trust to a municipality. Replacement Bylaws were changed to accommodate the checklist from the government. Members voted to rescind our old bylaws and adopt a new set of bylaws at the 2018 January AGM.

Finances: Our outgoing treasurer, Bev French, has completed the 2017 audit. Thanks so much for your hard work and dedication but also for your long memory. I hate to think what might have been missed without you to remind me. GIC interest: already accrued deposited in our General account: about \$800 to \$1,000.00 per year. RDRN will withdraw \$5,000.00 from the GIC account's interest (if possible) and deposit in the general account. With interest rates so low, these endowments no longer generate a lot operating income. Is it time to use this money to subsidize our conservation and outreach programs instead?

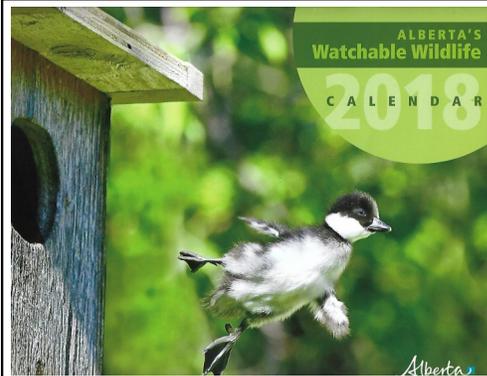
Membership: We looked into raising the cost of memberships; single to \$25 and \$30 for family – currently, membership fees must be set by the members by the members at the Annual General Meeting. Membership drive: experiment with sending out three notices has worked well. Membership coordinator: Bev has been tracking our membership as well as providing them with tax receipts.

Casino: The 2018 Casino is set for February 6th and 7th 2018. Special thanks to coordinator Eileen Ford and her volunteers. The cash generated from this event is vital to the work we do. Memberships and personal donations barely cover our operating costs.

Casino Vision: We need new ideas about what to do with the proceeds. Do we spend it on our own programs OR do we pass it on to other organizations with ongoing conservation and/or education programs?

RDRN Board of Directors: Both new and returning Directors stepped up to make sure the RDRN continued to function and achieve its goals. Don Wales took care of finding candidates for the 2018 Board of Directors.

Ongoing Leadership: Unfortunately we have operated through my two year term without a Vice-President. Now that my two-year term is over, our well respected organization is at a crossroads. We could gradually become stale and irrelevant, or will a new leader



ALBERTA'S Watchable Wildlife CALENDAR 2018

Available now!

These calendars are free, available at any Alberta Fish and Wildlife office.