

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2021

## RICK TALLAS

Although it has been a very challenging year, the Red Deer River Naturalists (RDRN) have made great strides in our structural reorganization, our strategic planning, our updated policies, our community engagement, and our financial situation.

RDRN has a tremendous history - we were incorporated as a society in 1906.

RDRN has an incredible volunteer structure that keeps all our wonderful programs operating smoothly. These include:

**Social Media and Website:** Susan Van Der Hoek manages our website, [www.rdrn.ca](http://www.rdrn.ca), and our Social Media accounts: FB (579 members); Twitter (268 followers) and Instagram (274 followers).

**Monthly Newsletter:** From the professionally designed layout and wonderful articles these are truly a monthly delight. Thanks to Myrna Pearman, editor and layout; Doug Pedersen, monthly poster design; City of Red Deer and Abacus Datagraphics for printing; NOVA Chemicals for postage; Myrna Pearman, Dr. Sally Stewart, and Susan Van Der Hoek for regular articles and Phil French who assists me with distribution and mailing.

**Speaker Series:** Dr. Sally Stuart, our Speaker Series Chair, organized six Speaker Nights offered via Zoom, with up to 150 participants from Alberta, Canada, U.S. and overseas.

**Species Count:** Judy Boyd does an amazing job as the Count Compiler for the annual Christmas Bird and May Species Count.

**Bird Focus Group:** For many years, Keith Kline was the leader of our very popular weekly bird hikes. Thank you, Keith. He passed the job to Chris Olsen. Because of Covid, walks were cancelled last summer, but hopefully they will start up again this summer.

**Flower Focus Group and Insect Focus Group:** RDRN thanks Don Wales for leading the charge on these educational hikes. Several were held in the spring via Zoom, one in the field in May, and, like Bird Focus, the rest were canceled because of Covid.

**Birding Trail Guides:** RDRN continues to distribute their two excellent Birding Trail Guides, one for the City of Red Deer and one that covers Central Alberta.

**Adopt a Stream:** Spearheaded by Don Wales in collaboration with the City of Red Deer and Kerry Wood Nature Centre, this is an opportunity for the citizens of Red Deer to be stewards of sections of shoreline along the Red Deer River and its tributaries, to provide maps for annual shoreline clean-ups, and to provide resources for teachers, school groups, businesses, and individuals/families.

These programs run efficiently, and I would like to thank everyone involved for their tireless efforts.

RDRN has much to celebrate this year, the first one being getting all the paperwork completed for an anonymous donation in 2019. I would like to thank Rod Trentham, Tony Blake, (then President) and Bob Kruchten, along with Nancy Bergstrom, our legal representative, for all their time and effort. This allowed RDRN to set up the \$500,000 *Red Deer River Naturalists Endowment Fund for Nature* at the Red Deer and District Community Foundation (RDDCF). Tony Blake, Myrna Pearman, Dean Baayens, Anto Davies, Daryl Beck, Rod Trentham, Don Wales, Kirsten Bouwsema, Bob Kruchten and I worked together to set up the fund agreement. A big thanks to Erin Peden (RDDCF) and Nick Bailey (Altalaw LLP) for their guidance.

This endowment fund will enable our financial security well into the future and will give us the ability to support other community projects and initiatives.

Tony Blake, as President, was instrumental in establishing a Strategic Plan which will guide us into the future. The plan was developed under the expert guidance of Shari Hanson, Alberta Community Development, and with the able assistance of Administrative Manager, Teresa Neuman.

In 2021, the RDRN launched Nature Central, an initiative to document and inventory the 180 rural protected areas within 100 km of Red Deer. The goal of the program is to enhance existing biophysical inventory data and to encourage (especially during the pandemic) public appreciation and thoughtful exploration of these “in our own backyard” areas. Nature Alberta partnered with us by providing logistical support. Shaye Hill, Naturalist-in-Residence, and Sherry Scheunert, Assistant Naturalist, were hired to deliver the program. Myrna Pearman acted as the Volunteer Liaison. Myrna Pearman has since taken on a small contract to maintain the program over the winter months. Shaye’s presentation has illustrated the impact the Nature Central program had in the documentation and promotion of protected areas in Central Alberta, the development of partnerships, and the opportunity for citizen engagement in nature walks, family events, kayaking and an Indigenous healing plant walk. Check out the website, ([www.naturecentral.org](http://www.naturecentral.org)), to plan your visits to these hidden gems.

In 2021, RDRN relaunched the Habitat Steward Program. Myrna Pearman is the driving force behind this program. This program recognizes private citizens who—on their own initiative and at their own expense—conserve at least five acres of their property for native species. Habitat Steward properties will also be mapped (with landowner permission) and layered atop ecoregions and Ecologically Significant Areas to determine current and ideal habitat protection levels. RDRN will be providing signage to recognize these private protected areas.

RDRN hired Teresa Neuman as our first Administrative Manager on a four-month contract between April 1 and July 30. On September 1, we hired Peggy Birse to serve as our Managing Director. Peggy is currently the RDRN Recording Secretary and is diligently working on grant writing and assisting with other administrative duties.

Our committees have been working hard to comment on local and provincial issues including

- ◆ Statement on the Coal Issue
- ◆ Our stance on Red Deer’s proposed Cat Bylaw
- ◆ Our position on the Molly Banister Drive Extension

RDRN will continue to make our position known on any issues that fall within our objectives and goals. RDRN will continue to work with other nature organizations in the province.

Each year, the RDRN recognizes a member of our organization who has shown a long-time commitment to the objectives of the Society with our annual Owl Award. In November, RDRN presented the 2021 Owl Award to Doug Pedersen, naturalist and graphic designer whose stunning posters enhance our monthly newsletters.

The Red Deer River Naturalists provided a \$1,500 scholarship to a student at Red Deer Polytechnique studying natural history, wildlife stewardship, wildlife protection or the prevention of natural resource abuse. In 2021, the scholarship was awarded to Emma Cowley.

Our deep appreciation goes to our partners, funders and donors who supported our work and projects in 2021:

- ◆ The Red Deer and District Community Foundation which manages our RDRN Endowment Fund for Nature and supports conservation projects.
- ◆ The Waskasoo Environmental and Education Society (WEES) and Kerry Wood Nature Centre (KWNC) where our office is housed.
- ◆ Nature Alberta, our partner on the Nature Central project, supports us with provincial information and technology.
- ◆ Eco Canada for providing funding towards Nature Central.
- ◆ Stakeholders, including landowners and organizations such as the Alberta Conservation Association, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ducks Unlimited, and Lacombe County, and other partners such as Alberta Environment and Parks, Red Deer County, City of Red Deer, and the Alberta Native Bee Council.
- ◆ The City of Red Deer and KWNC for their partnership on the Adopt-a-Stream project.
- ◆ Lacombe County for their support of our *Wild About Bees* workshop by donating "Wild About Bees" booklets and packages of "Pollinator Mix."

◆ **We would like to say a special thank you to all our donors in 2021:** Anonymous, Ruth & Dorothy Bower, Vandy and Phillip Bowyer, Myron and Karin Bjorge, Christie Campbell, Laurie Cressey, Johanna De Vries, Morris and Hazel Flewwelling, Robert and Elaine Hatala, Ed Karpuk, Debbie and Cam McCluskey, Susan Morris, Judith and David Russell, Cliff Soper, Susan Van Der Hoek, Wendy and Vic Walls, Janet Walter, Border Paving, Logan Fitzpatrick, Nova Chemicals and Abacus Datagraphics. A big Shout out! Thank You

Tony Blake resigned as President in November and I, a Vice President at the time, stepped in as Interim President. We would like to thank Tony for his long years of dedication to RDRN. Myrna Pearman joined the board in January but stepped down in October to take on a small contract to act as Interim Coordinator of the Nature Central and Habitat Steward Programs. Rod Trentham also stepped off the board in April 2021. We welcome him back.

I would like to extend my appreciation to all those who served as Board members in 2021: Tony Blake, Anto Davies, Dean Baayens, Travis Boshman, Kirstin Bouwsema, Christine Farries, Ed Karpuk, Myrna Pearman and Rod Trentham. A special thanks to our Executive: Bob Kruchten (Treasurer), Daryl Beck (Secretary) and Don Wales (Past President). As of the end of 2021, our board consists of Rick Tallas, Bob Kruchten, Daryl Beck, Don Wales, Anto Davies, Dean Baayens and Kirstin Bouwsema. We look forward to 2022, with the return of experienced Board members and the election of new people who are offering to serve on the Board in 2022.

Hopefully 2022 will see a somewhat return to normal, and, as always, we will look at suggestions on issues from our membership.

Sincerely, Rick Tallas, Interim President

## EXHIBITIONS AT THE RED DEER MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY



**YA HA TINDA - THE RANCH -**  
Photography by Arto Djerdjerdjan

December 4, 2021 – March 5, 2022  
Opening Reception: December 12, 2021 at 2pm.

Red Deer Museum  
**mag**  
Art Gallery

Alberta Foundation for the Arts  
THE CITY OF  
Red Deer



**OUR West Country:**  
*Plein Air Painting in Alberta's Eastern Slopes*

December 11, 2021 – March 12, 2022  
Opening Reception: December 12, 2021 at 2pm.

Red Deer Museum  
**mag**  
Art Gallery