

# 2023 PRESIDENT'S REPORT BY RICK TALLAS

RDRN continues to be engaged on many fronts:

1. **BIRD FOCUS** – weekly bird walks with Chris Olsen
2. **FLOWER FOCUS** – Don Wales will be passing the torch.
3. **MAY SPECIES COUNT AND CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS** – Judy Boyd as stepping down after 20 years. Shelly-anne and John Goulet have graciously taken on the role
4. **MONTHLY MEETINGS with INTERESTING SPEAKERS** – thanks to coordinator Sally Stuart
5. **MONTHLY NEWSLETTER** – Myrna Pearman and Susan Van der Hoek are the editors.
6. **SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE** – thanks to Susan van der Hoek, we have an active social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.
7. **NATURE CENTRAL** – an initiative to inventory, document and promote the respectful enjoyment of rural protected areas within 100 km of Red Deer. Cathy Steele will be coordinating outings this year.
8. **HABITAT STEWARD PROGRAM** – a program to recognize landowners who conserve habitat on their property. Myrna Pearman is the lead for this program.
9. **ADOPT A STREAM** – an initiative to encourage the citizens of Red Deer to protect our rivers and creeks. More details coming soon!
10. **The OWL AWARD** – given each year to someone who works hard on behalf of RDRN This year's recipient was Sally Stuart
11. **RDRN ENDOWMENT FUND FOR NATURE** – we set this fund up with the RDDCF with the goal of creating an endowment fund to help support nature-based projects in Central Alberta.
12. **EXTERNAL GRANT PROGRAM** – we offer grants of up to \$5,000 each (maximum \$15,000 per year) for projects from non-profit organizations that match our goals and philosophy.

We also continue to promote our earlier projects, such as the Birding Trail Guides for both the City of Red Deer and for Central Alberta, and we have such ongoing initiatives such as a \$1,500 annual scholarship to Red Deer Polytechnique.

RDRN is increasing our public profile in Red Deer through RDRN apparel, updated website, (rdn.ca) new logos, and by trying to encourage more community and membership participation. You may have seen us at the Red Deer Rebels Game, and we also had a booth at the Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour .

I encourage everyone to let their voices be heard on matters related to the environment, and we welcome anyone who wants to join the board or help on committees. Please talk to me after if you are interested.

I would like to express my appreciation to all our members who supported our monthly meetings. Our meetings are highlighted by great speakers and wonderful fellowship. A special shout out to RDP profs, Sally Stuart, Sandra MacDougall and Gabriella Ibarguchi, who encourage their students to attend our meetings. It is always a treat to have the students in attendance.



Finally, thank you to all our dedicated Board members: Myrna Pearman (Vice-President), Daryl Beck (Secretary), Bob Kruchten, (Treasurer) and members Anto Davis. Cathy Steele (Nature Central Liaison) Ed Graff and Don Wales. Special volunteers include Rod Trentham (our Historian), Susan van der Hoek (social media, website, co-editor of the newsletter), Doug Pedersen (poster design), Judy Boyd (bird counts) Chris Olsen (bird walks) and Dina Beck (meeting refreshments). Rod Trentham is our Recording Secretary.

We would also like to thank McElhanney for generously donating the printing of our newsletter and thank NOVA Chemicals for covering postage costs.



## AGM WITH A FLAIR !

RDRN teamed up with the Waskasoo Environmental Education Society (WEES) and Friends of Kerry Wood Nature Centre (KWNC) to host a special evening at KWNC on January 25th.

We combined our AGM with an evening presentation and book signing by well-known writer and retired biologist, Lorne Fitch, who has been touring the province promoting his new book, *Streams of Consciousness*.

WEES kindly arranged for a tasting of “Daycation,” a Troubled Monk craft beer developed in honour of the 100th anniversary of Gaetz Lakes Sanctuary. Friends of KWNC arranged the book signing, provided volunteers to help with the evening, donated \$100 to help offset the food costs, and generously offered a 10% discount in the Gift Shop.

We would like to thank everyone who came out to support this event! We so appreciated the enthusiastic crowd. A special thanks to Dina (top left), Ula (top right) and Anto and Claudia (right) for their contributions.



## DID YOU KNOW BY SUSAN VAN DER HOEK

A group of vultures in flight is called a “kettle” while a “committee” refers to a group of vultures resting on the ground or in trees. A group of vultures that are feeding is called a “wake.” In Alberta, we have one breeding species, the Turkey Vulture (*Cathartes aura*). There are three species in the genus *Cathartes* of the family *Cathartidae*: Turkey Vulture in North and South America, and the Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture and

Greater Yellow-headed Vulture in South America.

The Turkey Vulture is black with a bald red head and pinkish bill. They absorb heat due to their dark colour, so to help moderate their body temperature, they defecate on their legs to cool the blood. Because Turkey Vultures lack vocal or-



gans (syrinx), the only sounds they can make are grunts or low hissing.

Turkey Vultures are scavengers, feeding almost exclusively on carrion. Their sense of smell is so sensitive that they can detect carrion from 13 km away.

Their stomach acid is extremely acidic, so they are able to digest just about anything.

As a defense mechanism, Turkey Vultures may vomit on a bird, animal, or human that gets too close. They nest in abandoned buildings, caves, hollow trees or thickets. They usually raise two chicks each year. Both parents incubate, and the young hatch after 30 to 40 days.