

## 2013 President's report

Nature Calgary is an organization that relies on volunteers for its successful operation. I would like to start by acknowledging the many volunteers that have contributed to the success of this year's program.

First of all our board of directors, without whom we would have no society and no programs.

Apart from myself this year's board has comprised

Ed Kissinger, Sue Konopnicki, John McFaul, Doug Collister, Sarah Nevill, Jan Brigden, Linda Vaxvick, John Stewart, Lynne Colburne, Karel Bergman, and Ian Ross. This is a very small board to support the diverse activities of a society like ours and I would like to thank them all for the many hours they have put into board activities this year.

Supporting the board we have some key volunteers who look after significant areas of our activities.

John Laurence is our membership secretary, and makes sure you all get your reminders and your membership cards. Val Pritchard helps with our newsletter and Val Schofield teams up with John to man the volunteer welcome table at our monthly meetings. Just recently Terry and Norma Wilson have joined the welcome table team.

Our Bird Study Group meetings are organized by the Bird Study Advisory Group, which consists of myself, Brian Elder, Dan Arndt, David Pugh, Eric Tull, Brenda Baker, and Carole Hachey. The meetings are fuelled by Janet Gill and Bernie Diebolt providing the coffee and cookies. Last month the BSG held a meeting on one of the most brutal nights in recent memory, but amazingly enough it was an almost standing room only crowd. So many thanks to that team for bringing us such outstanding speakers.

And then a long list of people who look after the many other events we have. These include Leonora and Dick Flynn for co-ordinating our booth at the Horticultural Garden Show, Lynne Colburne for bringing back our annual bus trip this year, and Penny Smith for once again organizing our annual banquet. Penny was ably assisted by several volunteers who included John McFaul, Bernie Diebolt, Joerg Gueldenpfennig, Shirley Fraser, Dorothy Johnson, Ian Ross, Val Schofield, and likely some others to whom I apologize for not having their names. Chris Havard for being our archivist.

Then there is one special volunteer. Gus Yaki has been co-ordinating our field trips for 11 years. That is longer than I have been a member of the society but I can clearly remember my very first field trip with CFNS, as we were known then. It was in October 2004 at Beaverdam Flats, and it quickly became clear to me that Gus was the man to stay close to. Gus has become a legend in both Calgary and Canada. Here is a younger Gus. And here is Gus as many of us know him. Expressive hands and often something in them. Gus was the recipient of the President's award a few years ago. Last year he was awarded Nature Alberta's prestigious Loran Goulden award at their AGM. I am sure he has received many other awards over the years. The earlier photograph was taken on a trip Gus made in (would anyone like to guess the year?) 1983. That trip recreated one made 30 years earlier which included Roger Peterson who met Gus's group. As I think you are all aware Gus has decided to stand down as our field trip co-ordinator. As a small token of our appreciation I would like to present Gus with two items. First a copy

of this photo collage. And second, because now he will have so much time on his hands, a copy of the Roger Tory Peterson biography. Gus plays a small part in that book.

Finally all our field trip leaders who between them led at least 150 field trips this year.

We sponsored some research on invasive species which was co-ordinated by Sarah Nevill at the Weaslehead.

For the first time this year, under Sue Konopnicki's leadership we sponsored two education grants for Calgary schools. These grants of \$1000 each went to Arbour Lake School and Vista Heights School.

We once again held our annual trip to Waterton National Park in July.

This was really the first full year of operation of our new website. I know we had some pointed discussions about the need for the site, but in retrospect I am more convinced than ever that it was the right way to go. Our former host site, the FAN (Nature Alberta) sit is now hanging by a thread with a (very) part time IT guy if anything goes wrong. I have also recently learned that another major Calgary nature related organization pays more in annual maintenance than our website cost to develop and currently has a barely operational site. All of this goes to show the debt we owe Linda and Jan for setting up our new site to meet all the specs, under budget, and on schedule. Having said that we still have a few minor issues to address, particularly with the PayPal side of the site. This is a little tricky because the site is essentially functional, but does occasionally require more user skill (and patience) than you might expect from (say) an Amazon.com site. We will keep you posted.

After several years of us holding meetings in Fort Calgary the City closed it down for renovations and we have moved to this location for our general meetings. Like any change some people love it, some are neutral, and some would like not to have changed, which of course was not an option for us. Personally I think this is a superb facility, we have an opportunity to give back to the community through the Food Bank donations, and I am sure that before long it will be hard to imagine meeting anywhere else.

Looking ahead we still need to engage more of our membership in participating in board activities. If we can not do that then we will certainly not be able to expand our activities and may have to cut back on them.

Another item that is dwelling on the minds of the board is our annual membership fees. At \$20/year these have to be, by far, the best bargain for outdoor and family activity in Calgary. But given our balance sheet it is hard to justify being able to raise them. However, our operating expenditure report represents a fine balance between two fairly large numbers, that (due to our treasurer's financial acumen) net out to about zero. So while we have no immediate plans to revisit the fees, it would only take a small hiccup (or unanticipated expense) to push us in that direction.

Finally I get to one of the more rewarding functions of my position which is make this year's president's award. This year I have two awards.

The first award this year goes to Jamie Noakes. Jamie was a board member for several years, certainly since before I came on to the board. He held a number of positions including being for several years our Natural Areas representative. He was vice President until he stood down a year ago. I know Jamie is not here tonight so I will send this to him.

The second award goes to Val Schofield. For many years Val has manned the welcome table, and has in effect been the “face” of Nature Calgary to new guests. Many of those guests have subsequently stayed on and joined the society.

I would like to conclude the “prepared” part of the report by saying say what a privilege it is to be your president. I do enjoy it, challenging as it has been at times.

So now I would like to offer you the opportunity to ask any questions you may have or offer up any suggestions for the board’s consideration.

Andrew Hart