



FRIENDS OF THE
HELENSCHULER
NATURE CENTRE SOCIETY

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



**"In every walk with nature
one receives far more than he seeks"**

- John Muir





THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND!

At the beginning of the year, we hoped that most of the pandemic challenges we experienced in 2020 would finally be behind us. Instead a government mandated closure of the Nature Centre created further challenges that would last a full six months. The impact of this was substantial and left us with no choice but to deliver many of our events (including our AGM) and programmes virtually.

Fortunately the great outdoors was still open and many of our River Valley Conservation Projects could therefore still be held. Coulee Cleanup, Shoreline Cleanup along with Invasive Weed Pulls saw over 600 volunteers removing over 500 bags of garbage from our city's natural spaces.

With many of our regular fundraising initiatives on hold, we were asked to participate in the Lowe's Canada Heroes Programme.

While you can read more about this later in this report, this initiative not only helped raise our community profile, but also raised over \$4,000 for the Friends of HSNC Society.

To ensure that our fundraising activities achieve their maximum potential, the Friends of then established a permanent Endowment Fund at the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta. This fund will ensure that we can continue to financially support locally based nature programming for many years to come.

As with previous years, these successes are due to the generous support of our members, volunteers and donors, all of whom deserve our heartfelt thank you!

RICK ANDREWS

President

OUR IMPACT

1

PERMANENT ENDOWMENT FUND ESTABLISHED AT
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF LETHBRIDGE AND
SOUTHWESTERN ALBERTA

1

LIVE EXHIBIT TEACHING PARTNER

4

SNAKE SAFETY PRESENTATIONS

589

CITY NATURE CHALLENGE OBSERVATIONS

1,155

PROGRAM ATTENDEES & PARTICIPANTS

4,200+

UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITORS

\$8,841

TOTAL DONATIONS RECEIVED FROM INDIVIDUALS

\$24,911

TOTAL FUNDS RAISED IN 2021

See our full financial report, available at
[NatureCentre.ca/2021](https://www.naturecentre.ca/2021)



OUR FOCUS

ADVANCING NATURE APPRECIATION IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA!

Friends of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre Society supports a community of environmentally-responsible citizens with interactive, nature-based educational experiences.

Our Society builds appreciation and connection with nature by:

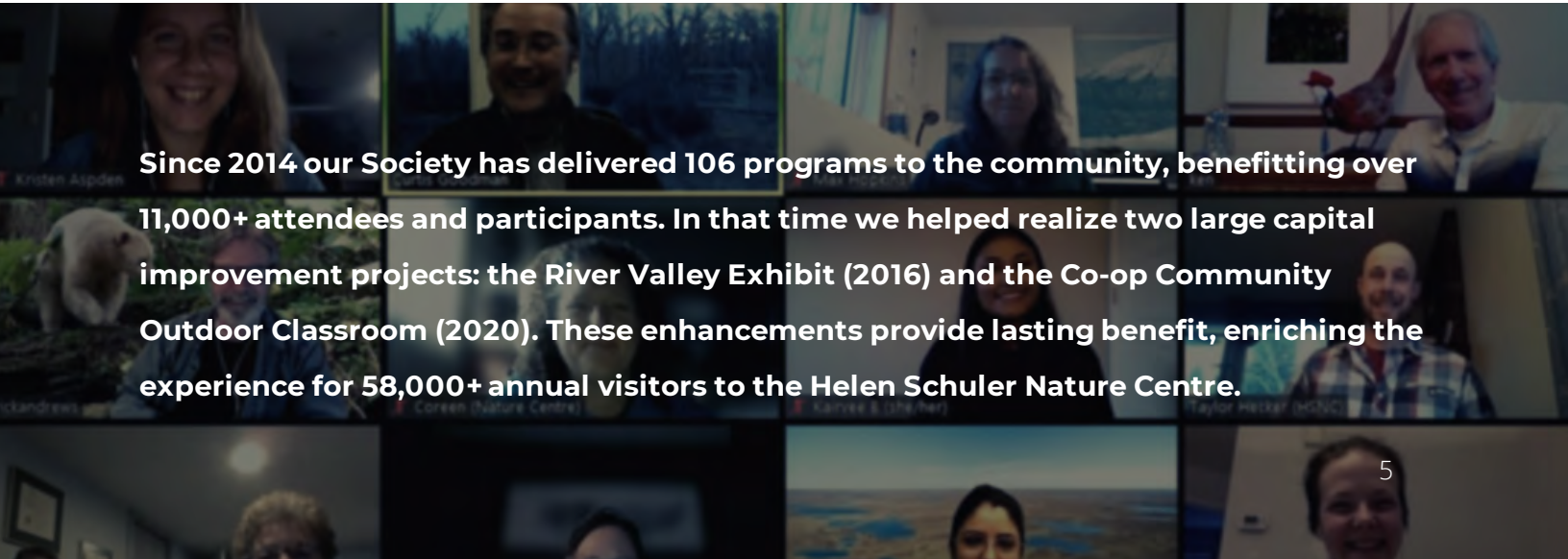
- Supporting environmental education programs and special projects;
- Enhancing the resources of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre;
- Fostering the importance of nature!

Our Society advances education by providing workshops and presentations about the local natural environment to the public.

We are proud to partner with a network of nature and environment focused organizations to offer and support nature-based programming in our community.

We are always seeking grant and partnership opportunities for our programs, projects, and initiatives for nature-based education in Lethbridge.

In many ways our efforts make the Nature Centre better! However, our Society does not offset the capital and operational requirements of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre. We provide enhancements for the benefit of the community that would not otherwise be available.



Since 2014 our Society has delivered 106 programs to the community, benefitting over 11,000+ attendees and participants. In that time we helped realize two large capital improvement projects: the River Valley Exhibit (2016) and the Co-op Community Outdoor Classroom (2020). These enhancements provide lasting benefit, enriching the experience for 58,000+ annual visitors to the Helen Schuler Nature Centre.

Notable Accomplishments

In the past year, our efforts have resulted in significant support of nature-based programs, capital enhancements at the Nature Centre, and awareness of our role in the community.

In January, we knew the government-mandated temporary closure of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre due to the COVID pandemic would impact our ability to plan and deliver Travel Adventures, our beloved fundraiser and friend-raiser events, but we did not fully anticipate the closure to last six months. Despite the challenges of planning in a pandemic (akin to trying to build a house in quicksand), we pivoted to virtual events where possible.

We were proud sponsors of the second annual *Lethbridge Play! Summit* that took place virtually in February. This special event brought together educators, researchers, parents, students, and policy-makers to learn from each other. It included a keynote address by Dr. Robin Gibb as well as presentations by Andrew Ichikawa, Dr. Beverly Dietze (an internationally-recognized expert on outdoor education and nature play), and several local organizations. This was followed by a *Mini Play! Summit* in June at the Nature Centre.

In February, we hosted a Facebook Live Q&A with Dorothy Graham in partnership with the Helen Schuler Nature Centre. Attendees learned how to use the iNaturalist citizen scientist platform as a tool to identify common species and increase awareness about biodiversity. It was also the first of two presentations we hosted related to the *City Nature Challenge*.

In March, we held our first ever virtual Annual General Meeting! Our Nature Alberta membership provides access to a Zoom account, which proved helpful in hosting an online AGM.

Also in March we hosted a Facebook Live Q&A with local artist Elaine Henderson. This provided public access to her exhibition on display in the Nature Centre's Community Art Gallery that was otherwise inaccessible due to the temporary facility closure. The program explored the artist's approach and philosophy, as well as the importance of connecting to place.

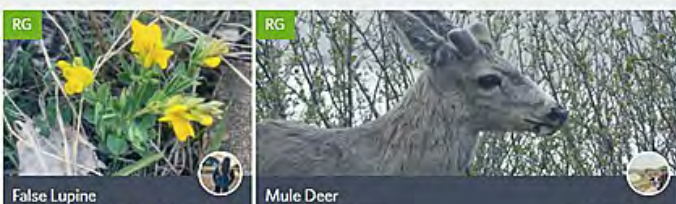
In April, we hosted another Facebook Live Q&A about the *City Nature Challenge (CNC)*. The CNC is a global citizen science blitz held annually in an effort to raise awareness about local





Overview **589** OBSERVATIONS **217** SPECIES **143** IDENTIFIERS

Recent Observations →



biodiversity. Our online Q&A demonstrated that participating in the *City Nature Challenge* is as easy as taking a photo!

During the first weekend of May, we co-hosted the *City Nature Challenge* with the Helen Schuler Nature Centre. This was the first time that the City of Lethbridge took part and we could not be more happier to share Lethbridge's results:

- 589 observations were made; 217 species were observed;
- 30 observers took part; 143 identifiers assisted;
- 84% of observations were research grade;
- Most Observations & Most Species reported by: Charlie Myles.

In May, we worked with Spark Power to develop and deliver a special presentation focused on *Working in Snake Territory* specific to solar operators. Our Snake Safety presentations offer valuable information about the snakes found in our region and what you can do to protect yourself while working in snake territory.

In partnership with the Alberta Ecotrust Foundation, we sponsored *River Valley Conservation Projects* - including *Coulee Cleanup*, *Shoreline Cleanup*, and *Invasive Weed Pulls*. We co-hosted *Shoreline Saturday* events on the first Saturday of each month and *Weedy Wednesday* events on the third Wednesday of each month throughout the summer. The conservation projects took place from May thru September; nearly 600 volunteers participated, helping to remove 509 bags of garbage from natural areas around Lethbridge.

In July, we delivered a *Snake Safety* presentation for the staff at the University of Lethbridge. Later in July we delivered a *Snake Safety and Black Widow Spiders* presentation for AECON Construction - which provided timely safety information for a major lighting renewal project underway at the Lethbridge Airport.

In August, at the request of the Lowe's Lethbridge staff team, our Society was approached to participate in the *Lowe's Canada Heroes Program*. During the month of September, Lowe's customers were asked to make a donation at checkout in support of our Society. This amount was then matched 50% by Lowe's; together the total amount raised by the campaign was \$4,180.50! This provided tremendous exposure and helped to raise our profile in the community!

Starting in September, in partnership with Rotary Club of Lethbridge East, we sponsored the *Inspired by Nature: Youth Art Exhibition* display in the Community Art Gallery at the Nature Centre. This annual showcase of creative expressions from youth aged 18 highlighted the next generation of artists. Rotary confirmed their continued support into 2022!

In November, our society participated as a stakeholder in the *City of Lethbridge Civic Culture Master Plan* focus group. This provided a chance for advocacy to raise awareness about the important cultural relevance of the river valley and natural spaces around Lethbridge.

In November, we received an amazing contribution towards youth environmental education programs in Lethbridge! A generous \$5,000 grant from a Donor Advised Fund at the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta will support fieldtrip experiences for youth participating in the *Natural Leaders Project*. This immersive, year-long program will support 700+ participants in discovering this place and our role as stewards in this ecosystem.

In December, we hosted a Facebook Live Q&A with Ken Orich about *Winter Birds*. This presentation was the perfect primer for the Lethbridge Christmas Bird Count - offering practical birding tips for this important annual citizen science project.

We are proud to announce that Davey the Snake has made his debut as part of the *Snakes Alive* exhibit now on display at the Nature Centre. After more than one year of regular handling and scenario training by Nature Centre volunteers, we are confident the new snake is ready to take over for Sophie, the former snake-in-chief at the Centre.

Finally, in December, we established a permanent Endowment Fund with the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta. This provides an opportunity to support the Nature Centre in perpetuity! Thank you to everyone who donated to make this possible. We appreciate your ongoing support to grow awareness of this fund.

Thanks to our Friends for helping us to achieve so much!

Photo Captions

- Cover - Family exploring Nature Quest Trail at Lethbridge Nature Reserve Park
Page 2 - Natural Leaders Project participants overlook Alexander Wilderness Park
Page 3 - Music in Nature with Andrew Ichikawa in new Co-op Outdoor Classroom
Page 4 - (Top) Saw-whet Owl photo by Ken Moore
(Middle) Pronghorn Antelope photo by Al Daiken
(Bottom) American Mink photo by Al Daiken
Page 5 - Virtual Annual General Meeting
Page 6 - (Top) Davey the Snake's first day at Helen Schuler Nature Centre
(Middle) *Evening Shadows* by Elaine Henderson
(Bottom) Lethbridge Play! Mini Summit participants on nature walk
Page 7 - (Top) City Nature Challenge Lethbridge
(Middle) Invasive Weed Pull at Galt Coulee Top in July
(Bottom) Inspired by Nature artists next to their art on display
Page 8 - (Top) Lowe's Canada Heroes Program cheque presentation
(Middle) Rotary Club of Lethbridge East supports Inspired by Nature
(Bottom) Davey the Snake at Helen Schuler Nature Centre
Page 10 - Lethbridge Nature Reserve Park photo by Chinook Country Tourism



Summary of Activities

Friends of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre Society is active year-round - delivering programs, grant-writing and fundraising, engaging in advocacy, and building our capacity.

Travel Adventures Presentations

- Our spring Travel Adventures programs were COVID cancelled due to the six month facility closure of HSNC

Conservation Initiatives

- Coulee Cleanup – Sponsorship (April 21 - May 31)
- Shoreline Cleanup – Shoreline Saturdays – Sponsorship (May 1, June 5, July 3, August 7, September 4)
- Invasive Weed Pull – Weedy Wednesdays – Sponsorship (May 19, June 16, July 21, August 18)

Snake Safety Presentations

- Working in Snake Territory – Spark Power (19-May-21)
- Snake Safety at University of Lethbridge (14-Jul-21)
- Working Around Rattlesnakes and Black Widow Spiders – AECON Construction (28-Jul-21)
- Snakes of Alberta – Video Presentation for Nature Centre Exhibit (20-Nov-21)

Community Events & Workshops

- Lethbridge Play! Summit – Sponsorship (9-Feb-21)
- Ask a Naturalist – iNaturalist – Live Q&A with Dorothy Graham (26-Feb-21)
- Ask a Naturalist – Landscaping Wilderness – Live Q&A with Elaine Henderson (24-Mar-21)
- Ask a Naturalist – City Nature Challenge – Live Q&A with Dorothy Graham (14-Apr-21)
- City Nature Challenge – Community-wide Citizen Science BioBlitz (April 30 - May 3, 2021)
- Lethbridge Plays – Play Mini Summit – Sponsorship (24-Jun-21)
- Lowe's Canada Heroes – Fundraiser at Lowe's Lethbridge (September 1 - 30, 2021)
- Word on the Street – Author Presentation – Sponsorship (18-Sep-21) – COVID CANCELLED
- Inspired by Nature: Youth Art Exhibition – Sponsorship (29-Sept-21 thru 13-Nov-21)
- Lethbridge Civic Culture Master Plan Creative Conversation – Participant (17-Nov-21)
- Ask a Naturalist – Winter Birds – Live Q&A with Ken Orich (8-Dec-21)
- Davey the Snake – Live Exhibit Teaching Partner Sponsorship (now on display at HSNC!)

Governance

- Executive Meeting (10-Feb-21)
- Annual General Meeting (14-Mar-21)
- Executive Meeting (17-Aug-21)
- Executive Meeting (24-Nov-21)

Learn about our upcoming programs and events online at NatureCentre.ca/events

THANK YOU!

It takes a community to support and inspire closer relationships between people and the natural world around us. Join us in our mission to connect people to the benefits of the great outdoors!

You can help - take action in the following ways:

- Become a Friends Member
- Make a donation
- Volunteer with us
- Attend a program, event, or workshop
- Visit the Nature Centre
- Share a testimonial about the Nature Centre
- Spend more time outside
- Encourage your friends and family to join you
- Consider joining our Board of Directors



SUPPORT • ENHANCE • FOSTER

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