



FRIENDS OF THE
HELENSCHULER
NATURE CENTRE SOCIETY

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



“No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced”

- David Attenborough





THANK YOU FOR BEING A FRIEND!

2020 was a year like no other we have ever experienced. Yet despite all of its challenges, as you will see in this annual report, we were still able to achieve some very significant goals.

From the Society's point of view, two important achievements I find noteworthy are an increase in membership along with a successful Fall fundraising campaign. Both of these successes may be interpreted as signs that our Society is on the right track, that people find

value in our work and are willing to help support local nature-based programming in a number of different ways.

Our success therefore, is directly attributable to the generous ongoing support of our donors, members and volunteers, all of whom came together at a time when it was needed most, and all of whom deserve a huge and heartfelt **"THANK YOU!"**

RICK ANDREWS

President

OUR IMPACT

1

CO-OP COMMUNITY OUTDOOR CLASSROOM BUILT

2

PUBLICATIONS RELEASED

22%

YEAR-OVER-YEAR MEMBERSHIP INCREASE

3,400+

PROGRAM ATTENDEES & PARTICIPANTS

5,100+

UNIQUE WEBSITE VISITORS

\$12,010

TOTAL DONATIONS RECEIVED

\$257,946

TOTAL EXPENSES IN 2020

\$76,171

TOTAL FUNDRAISED IN 2020

See our full financial report, available at
NatureCentre.ca/2020



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 on 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 92 programs to the community, benefitting over 10,000 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 kicked off an exciting line-up of Travel Adventures presentations featuring Lyndon Penner, Joanna Fraser, Rick Andrews & Carol Leriger, Chris Fisher, and Derry Armstrong. An increase in donations alongside quickly reserved seating shows strong community support for programs like this. In 2019 each Travel Adventures program raised approximately \$500 while each program in 2020 raised over \$900! Thank you to all attendees for making this possible!

In January we also partnered with Lethbridge Plays to sponsor the inaugural *Play! Summit*. This full day event convened educators, researchers, parents, students, and policy-makers to learn from each other about the benefits and importance of play in everyday life.

Our Annual General Meeting was Sunday March 15, the evening before a nation-wide lockdown came into effect.

As a result of the mandatory public health measures, we cancelled many of our scheduled events and activities. The Snake Safety presentations at Red Cliff Public Library and Police Point Interpretive Centre in Medicine Hat and the Jane's Walk in Lethbridge were cancelled. Our support of river valley conservation projects like Coulee Clean-up and Shoreline Clean-up was postponed.

In May we worked with the Helen Schuler Nature Centre to host an online survey of stakeholders which helped inform the facility reopening strategy. The survey identified gaps in services our community was struggling with and how our efforts could help.

In June we secured funding from the Community Foundations of Canada so that the Nature Centre could develop and offer a 'Get Outside - Nature Play' program. Weekly content was developed and released online by the Nature Centre so that families had immediate access to resources during this difficult time. The Nature Centre then adapted and repackaged this content into several different formats to allow for easier distribution to local families without internet access.





'Get Outside – Nature Play' brochures were distributed to 500 local families in two deliveries of the Mindful Munchies Program organized by the Lethbridge Food Bank and My City Care. This partnership recognized that access to nature and play are as necessary for children's health as nutrition. These much-needed resources became essential during a time when many recreation facilities and schools were unavailable.

Thanks to a partnership with eight local organizations, 'Get Outside – Nature Play' brochures were also distributed to 500 local families in an August Activity Bag. These provided families with ideas and inspiration, helping to remind them that the 'Fun Stuff Happens Outside!'

The 'Get Outside – Nature Play' content was also adapted for temporary trail signage that was deployed in several parks around Lethbridge in July, August, and September with the help of Nature Centre volunteers.



In June the Nature Centre facility resumed indoor exhibit experiences; we helped reduce touch-points within the facility while enhancing visitor experience through QR codes linked to activities on our Society's website. Using a mobile device, visitors could independently interact with sounds and videos from exhibit signs and displays. We leveraged this technology to host similar content for many outdoor trail-based activities available in Lethbridge Parks in the summer.

Our programs pivoted to an online format which allowed us to connect with our audience in a safe way. The online film premiere of *Avian Summer* – the latest documentary film by Rick Andrews, local wildlife photographer AND our Society's president – had nearly 100 participants take part in the live Q&A and film screening. In partnership with the Nature Centre, we began hosting an online Facebook Live Q&A event with local naturalists. We hosted a Snake Safety presentation in September during the rattlesnake fall migration to raise awareness of how to safely coexist in snake habitat. In December, we co-hosted a Winter Birds presentation in advance of the annual Christmas Bird Count.



In October our Society participated as a river valley stakeholder in the City of Lethbridge Park's River Valley Engagement focus group. This provided a chance for advocacy to raise awareness about the current challenges, opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses of how the river valley is managed for different user groups. Our representatives encouraged the need for more environmental education programming, as well as support for conservation of the natural spaces within the heart of our city.

Also in October, by audience demand, we hosted several in-person screenings of *Avian Summer* at the Nature Centre. This provided an opportunity for small groups to see the film on the big screen. All proceeds from *Avian Summer* screenings, virtual sales, and rentals went directly to the Growing the Grassroots Endowment Fund!

In November we called upon our members to renew memberships and consider a donation given the impact the pandemic had on our charity's activities and ability to fundraise in 2020. Our membership responded in kind – together you helped us raise \$11,300+ for the Growing the Grassroots Endowment Fund which will support the Nature Centre into perpetuity. Remarkably, we also increased our paid membership by 22% in 2020 over 2019!

Later in November, our members were encouraged to raise awareness about the impacts that potential budget reductions at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre and the impact this would have on environmental education in our community. Thanks in part to support from people like you, City Council heard that the Nature Centre is an essential part of our river valley and there was no reduction in base funding to the Centre.

Also in November, the Co-op Community Outdoor Classroom at the Helen Schuler Nature Centre was completed. This represents the culmination of two years of effort by our Friends to fundraise \$260,000 in support of a new outdoor learning space with some of the most scenic views our river valley has to offer! The new and improved space will inspire many generations of visitors to develop a closer relationship with nature.

Thanks to our Friends for helping us to achieve so much during a strange and challenging year!

Photo Captions

Cover - First Junior Naturalists program to use the new Co-op Community Classroom!
Page 2 - Deer in Nature Reserve Park
Page 3 - Rick Andrews, president, introduces a Travel Adventures
Page 4 - (Top) Prairie Hare photo by Al Daiken
Page 4 - (Middle) Nature Centre staff say "Thanks!" for Co-op Community Classroom
Page 4 - (Bottom) Long-tailed Weasel photo by Al Daiken
Page 5 - Nature Centre visitors enjoying the River Valley Exhibition at HSNC
Page 6 - (Top) Board of Directors at Annual General Meeting (L-R) Samantha Tinworth, Marni Hope, Rick Andrews, Taylor Hecker, Rick Parker, Curtis Goodman
Page 6 - (Middle) Samantha Tinworth, past-president, introduces Travel Adventures
Page 6 - (Bottom) Chalk advertisements were drawn around town to promote the release of *Avian Summer*
Page 7 - (Top) August Activity Bags - 500 were distributed!
Page 7 - (Middle) Family near *Get Outside - Nature Play* temporary trail signs
Page 7 - (Bottom) Family Field Trip participants spotted a Monarch Butterfly caterpillar
Page 8 - (Top) In-person *Avian Summer* film screening at HSNC
Page 8 - (Middle) Original Amphitheatre (BEFORE)
Page 8 - (Bottom) New Co-op Community Classroom (AFTER)
Page 10 - Cottonwood Park



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

- Spectacular Birds of Australia & New Zealand with Lyndon Penner (20-Jan-20)
- Exploring Brazil's Pantanal & Iguazu National Park with Joanna Fraser (31-Jan-20)
- A Taste of South America with Carol Leriger & Rick Andrews (28-Feb-20)
- Birds in Our World with Chris Fisher (27-Mar-20) – COVID CANCELLED
- Kootenay Plains with Derry Armstrong (24-Apr-20) – COVID CANCELLED

Conservation Initiatives

- River Valley Conservation Projects, including Coulee Clean-Up, Shoreline Clean-Up, Invasive Weed Pulls (Event Support and Sponsorship) – COVID CANCELLED

Snake Safety Presentations

- The 7 Snakes of Alberta (12-Feb-20)
- Living with Snakes at Red Cliff Library (31-Mar-20) – COVID CANCELLED
- Living with Snakes at Grassland Naturalists (1-Apr-20) – COVID CANCELLED
- Jane's Walk – Living with Snakes in Lethbridge (2-May-20) – COVID CANCELLED
- Ask a Naturalist – Living with Snakes - Live Q&A with Ken Moore (9-Sep-20)

Community Events & Workshops

- Lethbridge Play! Summit – Sponsorship (21-Jan-20)
- 'Lethbridge through the Seasons' Colouring Book Distribution as part of Mindful Munchies Food Bank Hamper Program (COVID-19 response) (1-Apr-20)
- Jane's Walk: Snakes on the Plains (2-May-20) – COVID CANCELLED
- Publication: Get Outside 101 - Nature Play Guide - Ideas for the Outdoors (1-Jun-20)
- Publication: Get Outside 101 - Nature Play Guide - More Ideas for the Outdoors (1-Jun-20)
- Nature Play Day 2020 (13-Jun-20) – COVID CANCELLED
- Avian Summer online film premiere – Live Q&A with Rick Andrews (25-Jun-20)
- Get Outside Temporary Signage Program (Aug-Sept, 2020)
- Word on the Street – Author Presentation (19-Sep-20) – COVID CANCELLED
- Avian Summer film screenings x4 (26-Oct-20 & 27-Oct-20)
- Ask a Naturalist – Winter Birds - Live Q&A with Ken Orich (9-Dec-20)

Governance

- Executive Meeting (22-Jan-20)
- Executive Meeting (11-Mar-20)
- Annual General Meeting (15-Mar-20)
- Executive Meeting (9-Jul-2020)

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

Friends of the Helen Schuler Nature Centre Society

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