

## **President's Report To The 2021 Annual General Meeting of Grasslands Naturalists Society**

As I review my past year as President of the Grasslands Naturalists Society, it is with very mixed feelings. Being a year of pandemic, it has been an unprecedented year to be President and to operate as a non-profit volunteer organization.

We have gone a whole year without holding an indoor program and our outdoor program activities have at times been limited and hampered by covid regulations. Along with many other activities in our world we have struggled to maintain operations.

Nonetheless we can look back on some significant accomplishments. Your board of directors has continued to meet throughout the year, the Chronicle has continued publication thanks to our faithful and talented editor Milt Spitzer, and some of our committees have undertaken huge accomplishments.

To cite a couple major examples, our issues committee under Martha Gue's chairpersonship has launched the Adopt-a-Pond initiative and that has garnered unprecedented support from the extended Medicine Hat community and it continues to grow today. Over 100 individuals and organizations are now involved in clean-up and monitoring of our city's many ponds and riparian areas.

Another major undertaking has been the Scenic Views project under the direction of Gerry Elhert and others. This is resulting in the publication of Medicine Hat's many scenic views online highlighting the importance of good stewardship and conservation of these special areas. Grant funding has been raised for this initiative and signage is being erected at these views along with cooperation from the City of Medicine Hat and Medicine Hat Tourism. Our publication will point out the unique natural character of each view and the importance of preserving this heritage.

In this past year, the board has also authorized the launch of a GN sponsored Climate Change Symposium which hopefully will take place near the end of 2022 or early 2023. This is an initiative that will help our community to discuss and understand the changing world that is coming because of major changes happening to our climate. It is an initiative geared to reaching our community's average citizens, including and especially youth, and illustrating through carefully selected presenters, how southeastern Alberta is being affected by climate change and offering hope and ideas on how to meet coming challenges. Grant funding will be sought for this initiative.

It is also hoped that we will resume our indoor programming this fall, covid permitting. Watch for details.

Our natural world is undergoing unprecedented change. We have seen glimpses of this through extreme weather events this summer. Drought and heat, smoky summers, floods and fires. Declining bird and insect populations are becoming more and more evident. As a society it behooves us to help people come to terms with what's happening to our planet. As naturalists we are on the front line witnessing extreme events and we are often the first to see impacts to our natural world. We are also the ones who can offer hope and ideas to take better care of our natural world.

In closing I would like to thank some special people who have served Grasslands Naturalists well over the years. Betty Rainville, our secretary for several years is leaving the board, as is Eileen Cowtan who has been a mainstay of our board and executive for more years than I can count. Linda Fisher our board member and indoor program chair has also left. Dave McKenzie, a past president and most recently casino chair has also had to retire his position. All of these departures are to one degree or another health related which leads us to the reality that the membership of our society is getting older and we need to recruit younger members if we are to carry on. We are in need of new board members, a vice-president which has been vacant for a year and some new committee members. If you are approached to serve your society please step forward. Without people filling our board and executive positions we cease to be a legal entity. In order to secure the future of our society we must have willing volunteers. Please consider where you can help.

It has been a privilege to serve as your President this past year, in spite of my own health issues. We are moving forward with optimism that the vaccinations will bring the pandemic under control and some kind of normality is to be looked forward to in the coming year.