

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

AGM 27 May 2021

For Nature Vancouver this past year has been a very different year. With initial restrictions, due to the pandemic, and the uncertainty about how to stay safe, it was only in October 2020, that the Board felt confident enough to make plans on resuming field trips. Then just at that point, Dr. Bonnie Henry reinstated and increased the restrictions to ban any gatherings, even outside, of people not from the immediate households.

Then in early December, the Nature Vancouver Christmas Bird Count was cancelled. This cancellation was initiated with the best of intentions but did result in a significant and symbolic loss in the cancellation of the CBC for the first time since its inception in 1952.

Now looking forward to the gradual lifting of restrictions and widespread distribution of vaccines, we can also re-evaluate our reaction to risk. I hope that moving forward, we can focus more in challenging situations on how to make things happen safely, rather than simply resorting to restricting activities completely.

If it arises again, it will of course be a complicated challenge, but it will be something that, as circumstances arise, the board will discuss in full and come to a consensus which is the best for our members and the society as a whole.

On this note, I cannot say how much I appreciate working with all the members of the current Board, and how impressed I am that a group, with different backgrounds and perspectives can be open enough to listen to different ideas, debate them and arrive at a consensus or at least an acceptable compromise, respecting, even if not agreeing with other different views.

An initiative started but yet to be acted upon has been the excellent suggestions we received for worthy projects and initiatives for Nature Vancouver to take on. All suggestions were appreciated and have not been forgotten. Hopefully with a return to normal functioning, we can move forward to make them happen.

As in all past years, there has been great thought, effort and hard work put in by Nature Vancouver members. On the Board, we acknowledge the contributions of Adele Liu, who keeps track of our finances; Angela Bond, who has been recording minutes of our Board and Annual General meetings, a task now with added difficulties imposed by the Zoom platform; and Donna Underhill, our new Membership Secretary, who has spent considerable amount of time since last September 2020 to maintain our membership database and coordinate it with BC Nature.

Outside the board, I would like to acknowledge Harvey Dueck who continues to keep our technology up to date and always has been there to troubleshoot when problems arise. There is also the great effort by the Discovery team, led by Dan Overmyer, to edit and publish the latest issue of Discovery in December 2020. We also note, with pleasure, the contribution of time and effort put in by Ron Long, in organizing, judging and presenting the Annual Photo Contest.

A huge ‘thank you’ has to go out to Denis, who, no doubt assisted by Teresa, has regularly sent out the weekly e-News to help us all keep in touch over the last year. Under their stewardship the e-News has become more interesting and more creative with the poetry, photographs and philosophical thoughts featured each week – essentially a work of art in itself.

A positive achievement of the last year has been the shift to online presentations and talks. Through the efforts of Denis Laplante and Laura Cottle, assisted by Kelly Sekhon, who keeps the NV website up-to-date, the weekly Zoom presentations have become a key part of Nature Vancouver over the last year. The contributions of all the sections and their organizers to put together these talks have made this last year infinitely richer.

I believe that the Thursday evening presentations have been important for most members to look forward to through the fall, winter and spring, not only for the information on a variety of different areas of natural history but also for connecting with other members of Nature Vancouver, even if in little boxes on a computer screen.

For me this was reinforced on March 23rd of this year after the initial lifting of restrictions when, as President, I received the following email from Bill Fairbank, who is in the audience tonight:

Now that we are allowed ten people in a group out of doors will you be resuming the nature walks which were so popular before the lock down? Bill.

I responded that, as with any directive from Dr. Bonnie Henry, it was nuanced but that I too was looking forward to fieldtrips. I added that I intended to lead a fieldtrip but as a ‘rank amateur birder and botanist’ I would need assistance, and would Bill volunteer to help me?

I received the response from Bill that he does not feel capable of leading a fieldtrip at his age of 96 years old. Bill, now I look for you at the Thursday presentations, and want you to know that for me, you are an inspiration in how to live a full life, with high expectations and keeping a keen interest in all that goes on around.

That feeling extends pretty much to everyone I know from Nature Vancouver. I feel very humble and very honoured to count you all as fellow society members and as friends.

Thank you so much!