



Alberta Birds of Prey Foundation

Coaldale, AB

This organization started from a neighbourhood backyard and embraced the challenge of transforming a flat, marginally productive, flood-prone, cultivated field for its future new site. The mission was to help elevate the site to a one-of-a-kind international quality facility that could be experienced and enjoyed by visitors of all ages regardless of their accessibility needs. Alvin Reinhard Fritz Architect Inc. (ARFAi) entered the picture just when Centre founder, Colin Weir, was searching for a visionary and community-minded architectural firm to collaborate with. In the words of Weir, “since he had the good fortune to be introduced to and collaborate with Alvin Fritz, the centre really started to take off and soar”. Combined with the generosity and kindness of corporate sponsor FortisAlberta, over the past fifteen years, ARFAi has designed and worked on a number of interesting projects including the free-flight flying field/amphitheatre, Eagle Atrium, Hawk Walk and Owl Amphitheatre.

In the beginning, many people said this proposed centre wouldn't happen. The thought of a public wildlife rescue centre that would attract international visitors while help prevent flooding, seemed like an impossible feat, especially with no operating subsidies. Today, due to the participation of like-minded visionaries Weir and Fritz, along with many supporters, the Alberta Birds of Prey Centre is an admired and exemplary success. The 70-acre site now features a reclaimed wetland that helps mitigate regional flooding, a recreational park, an environmental learning facility, a wildlife rescue centre, and a tourist attraction that welcomes schools from across Alberta and attracts visitors from around the world. Most importantly, the facility operates without government operating subsidies and is financially self-sustaining. Thanks to this collaboration, the project is a sparkling success with a great deal of unrealized potential yet to explore.

Image provided by Colin Weir



Image above by Sheri Macardy

Conservation, Education, and Experience at Core

Through its focus on working primarily with owls, eagles, hawks, and falcons, the mandate of the Alberta Birds of Prey Centre is to rescue and release injured and orphaned birds of prey back to the wild and to conserve wildlife through habitat enhancement. To make the most meaningful community contributions this organization also places a high priority on sharing their work with the public, and creating unique and experiential learning opportunities with a focus on youth and people with disabilities who are often deprived of these experiences.



Images to left and above provided by Colin Weir



The Focus Defines How We Design for the Future

Over the years, ARFAi has had several opportunities to contribute through design and collaboration with Weir, working at a high level and believing in an incredibly bright future. We have recognized an entrepreneurial spirit that, given the opportunity, could readily make the entire region an international destination and an enviable outcome to so many counterparts around the globe.

With the renewed global commitment to sustaining our natural resources, Birds of Prey has become an international leader in demonstrating what success can be achieved through a deep level of commitment, energy, and applied effort. Birds of Prey has been working extremely hard to define an expanded wetland that provides a home for so much wildlife, even while habitat in the region has been diminishing.

Master planning has taken place at numerous levels in anticipation of the future requirements of Birds of Prey. Slated for the future of the facility are several exciting ventures which include a sustainable multi-purpose facility which would also have a housing component, multiple aviary's, and eventually a vision for the largest aviary in the world. ARFAi is privileged to be involved on the ground floor of such limitless opportunity. We look forward to providing bold and forward-thinking architectural expertise in close alliance with Birds of Prey, understanding that it can continue to positively impact the entire region.



Images provided by Colin Weir



A Different Kind of Shelter – Helping Owls and Children

Close collaboration with Weir and his organization allowed us to overcome some unique challenges to design a very exciting amphitheatre for the Alberta Birds of Prey Centre's owl interpretive programs. Owls are particularly sensitive to bright sunshine and require shade during display periods. Our firm analyzed the azimuth angles of the sun in order to achieve the desired outcome. An area of the site with natural sloping grades was selected in which the structure could most naturally be situated to provide a comfortable setting for both the owls and the Centre's school groups and other visitors.

Image to left provided by Colin Weir







Building Awareness Through Building Community

Working on the smallest of projects with non-profit groups can sometimes make for the most fascinating work and have the most diverse community impact. The Alberta Birds of Prey Centre is one such non-profit Client. ARFAi has been immensely rewarded working with this organization and is proud to be a supporter.

The basis of success is always positive relationships. This project is an example of what can be achieved when a community-minded architectural firm contributes its skill-set to a deserving grass-roots community group with very limited resources, but extraordinary commitment and a unique, promising vision. Through opportunities for tremendous local awareness of the vision and services provided by visionary Colin Weir and his organization, ARFAi has been proud and committed to embrace and support that vision in any way possible.

More than we would ever have deemed possible in such a short time, Birds of Prey has made an enormous contribution to the region through conserving wildlife, initiating tourism, and providing stormwater protection to its community. It is uncommon for organizations of this nature to achieve the measure of success and influence that Birds of Prey has within the first generation of its founding members.

Much appreciation is also extended to FortisAlberta as a long term and valued supporter of the Birds of Prey Foundation.

Image on previous page provided by Colin Weir