

The Canadian Field-Naturalist

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club Awards for 2022, presented April 2023

ELEANOR ZURBRIGG, BETHANY ARMSTRONG, IRWIN BRODO, CHRISTINE HANRAHAN, KAREN MCLACHLAN HAMILTON, and LYNN OVENDEN

The 2022 Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club (OFNC) awards were presented at the Club's Awards Night on 1 April 2023. Awards are given to members or non-members who have distinguished themselves by accomplishments in the field of natural history and conservation or by extraordinary activity within the Club. Three awards were conferred for 2022, one for long time service in bird-related matters and two for conservation efforts of local natural areas.

George McGee Service Award: Chris Traynor

In recognition of a member who has contributed significantly to the smooth running of the Club over several years.

Chris Traynor is a long-time member of the OFNC and well-known in the birding community for his passionate interest in birds, particularly owls about which he is especially knowledgeable. It is no surprise then that he served for 26 years on the Club's Birds Committee, much of that time as Chair (18 years). As Chair he dealt with innumerable issues that arose regarding birds and birdwatching in the Ottawa region. A key issue that arose during his tenure was developing the OFNC Code of Conduct for birding. The document was a group effort, but Chris was the person who steered it through appropriate OFNC channels to approve the finished product. The Code of Conduct emphasises the welfare of birds and delineates ways that birders can pursue their interests while safeguarding birds. Another significant achievement was negotiating with the Department of National Defence for birding access to Shirleys Bay for OFNC members, when such access was still allowed.

For over a decade Chris was also Chair of the Bird Feeders Sub-committee. This involved a prodigious amount of work, for example: making sure there was a ready supply of seed for the feeders, finding volunteers to take responsibility for the OFNC-run bird feeders at the various National Capital Commission Greenbelt locations, being available should someone be unable to continue with maintaining the feeders, including replacing old ones, and finding new volunteers as necessary, as well as handling all questions and details about the feeders.

Furthermore, Chris was a member of the Bird Records Sub-committee for over a decade, either as a voting member or as an alternate. This sub-committee is responsible for documenting and verifying all occurrences of rare birds within the Ottawa district. An extensive database of records is maintained permanently and used for updating the two bird checklists for the region.

As a member of the OFNC Board for more than a decade, Chris reported on the various committees and sub-committees on which he sat or chaired. While Chris did not offer comments on every item discussed, when he did, they were astute, perceptive, and to the point.

As a member of the OFNC's Facebook group, Chris provides extensive and significant contributions to the birding community by helping with identification and addressing various bird-related questions or concerns, always available to offer his expertise and knowledge.

There is more to Chris than birds and birding. He has a long-standing interest in dragonflies and damselflies and has spent considerable time studying, pursuing, and documenting the various species inside and outside the Ottawa district. He has written extensively on Odonata for *Trail & Landscape*, preparing species profiles for each issue (an ongoing project). These are detailed, well-documented, informative articles that provide valuable information and aid with identification. The identification tips and the sections on "possible confusables" are particularly helpful and much appreciated by the growing number of odonate enthusiasts in the region.

Chris has been a stalwart and key member of the OFNC for decades, and we are delighted to acknowledge and celebrate all the work he has done on be-

half of the Club. He is a very worthy recipient of the George McGee Service Award.

(Prepared by Christine Hanrahan)

Conservation Award—Member: Sharon Boddy

In recognition of an outstanding contribution by a member in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley.

We are pleased to award Sharon Boddy for her conservation work with two Friends groups in west Ottawa where she lives. Sharon co-founded the Friends of Carlington Hill in 2016 (renamed Friends of Carlington Woods in 2021) and founded the Friends of Hampton Park in 2019. She continues to lead both groups. In October, Sharon led OFNC members on a tour of Carlington Woods.

Carlington Woods is a 22 ha upland deciduous forest with some mature trees, adjacent to Carlington Park and the former quarry. Hampton Park is located just 2 km away, north of the Queensway beside Island Park Drive. The park is almost 100 years old with a good variety of native plant species, including trees more than 200 years old. Both Friends groups raise awareness of the natural value of their forests and work to preserve them.

Carlington Woods and Hampton Park are both Environmental Protection Zones of the city, a designation that prohibits off-leash dogs, mountain biking, and building forts. Nevertheless, these urban forests face pressure from these activities and other recreational use. In 2021, Sharon obtained a City of Ottawa Community Protection grant on behalf of both groups, to commission a Natural Heritage and Impact Study on both parks (https://carlingtonparkhome.files.wordpress.com/2021/02/report_carlingtonhampton_final_dec21.pdf).

The study identified significant features and concerns in each forest and recommended specific restoration projects, removal of invasive species, and formalizing a reduced trail network. It confirmed the Friends' concerns and goals. Both Friends groups host

guided walks, organize clean ups, and maintain lively Facebook pages with cartoons, photos, conservation advice, and invitations to work parties and walks. They have established pollinator gardens at the edge of each forest. In Hampton Park, they blocked some informal trails, planted native species on them, and collaborated with the National Capital Commission on removal of Japanese Knotweed colonies. In 2021–2022, Sharon coordinated a major project in Carlington Woods to replace dense buckthorn in a small area, with native species. For this, she collaborated with both Friends groups, Tree Fest Ottawa, local residents, and local students to gain funds to buy plants, grow native plants from seeds, remove the buckthorn, and plant the native species. She presented the project to the Invasive Plant Council's conference in January 2023.

Sharon Boddy is a writer, an environmental researcher, and community leader on conservation issues in west Ottawa. She communicates tirelessly with positive messages via a large email distribution list, Twitter, and the newsletters for each Friends group. She writes the newsletters, applies for grants, and liaises with city and National Capital Commission officials on behalf of the Friends groups. She organizes and leads most of their activities. The *Ottawa Citizen* has published her articles about Carlington Woods and Hampton Park Woods. Recently, she hosted eight virtual presentations by local experts on urban forests; this was a joint project of Tree Fest Ottawa and the Friends groups.

Sharon's colleagues confirmed: "she is the right person to receive this award ... two urban natural areas will be sustained and conserved because of her amazing efforts, diligence, communicating skills and ... experience". Congratulations, Sharon, and thank you.

(Prepared by Lynn Ovenden)

Conservation Award—Non-Member: John Sankey

This award recognizes an outstanding contribution by a non-member in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley.

John Sankey was recognized for his extraordinary stewardship and advocacy of Hunt Club Creek, one of the many small but biologically rich tributaries of the Rideau River. Curiosity may be a curse for cats, but it is a blessing when bestowed on bright, well-educated human beings. It is what drives research scientists to make breakthrough discoveries and what makes naturalists explore the natural world,

wherever they find it. It is not surprising therefore that John Sankey has filled both these roles, first as a physicist with the National Research Council for 30 years and, especially since his retirement in 1995, as a keen observer of natural history and tireless conservationist.

John became active in the Hunt Club Community Association (HCCA) soon after moving into Hunt Club Woods, a development just north of the Hunt Club Golf Course and east of Riverside Drive. He soon discovered the small creek winding its way

through the community, finally passing under Riverside Drive near the Rivergate high-rise apartments and cascading down to the Rideau River. Fascinated by the rich biological life of the creek, he explored its banks and its biota from one end to the other, writing numerous articles on his website about what he found, all the while advocating for the creek's preservation and enhancement. His volunteer work as a "stream watcher" began in 2013 as a project of the HCCA. John established a working relationship between the Association and the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority by joining in the latter's City Stream Watch Program, assessing the biodiversity and pollution levels of the creek, getting rid of garbage (almost entirely by himself over a period of three years), and raising local awareness of the creek's value and history through his many articles in the HCCA newsletters. John also enjoyed taking a few people at a time on discovery walks along portions of the creek. At his suggestion, the city placed a sign at one of the access points to the creek in Hunt Club Woods to explain the creek's importance to residents and visitors to the neighbourhood. It was, in fact, John himself who gave the creek its currently accepted name by submitting "Hunt Club Creek" to the official custodians of Geographical Names in Canada.

John's interest in conservation also extends to growing and tracking nut-bearing trees in the Ottawa

region. He spent his early years in the Niagara region where nut and fruit trees abound. After moving to Ottawa in the mid 1960s to take up a job with the National Research Council, he was curious to see if he could grow nut trees here. Despite the scepticism of some, he persisted and went on to plant hundreds of oak, Shagbark Hickory, and Black Walnut trees in the Ottawa region, for example as part of the Sawmill Creek recovery project, as well as documenting rare populations of these nut trees in the region. In recognition of this important work, he received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Eastern Chapter Society of Ontario Nut Growers in 2011.

A glance at John's website (johnsankey.ca) will reveal the breadth and depth of his knowledge of natural history, human history, nut-growing, conservation, and even music. (He is an accomplished harpsichordist and violinist, among his other talents.) Clicking the link for "An Ottawa Valley Naturalist" will open an array of useful and interesting articles including some on gardening, learning about birds, a guide to the identification of dragonflies, and even a recording of a singing deer mouse. The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club is grateful to have such a dedicated and energetic conservationist in the Ottawa community, and we recognize John Sankey for his efforts with the Conservation Award for 2022.

(Prepared by Irwin M. Brodo)