

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club Awards for 2003

IRWIN M. BRODO, CHRISTINE HANRAHAN, BEVERLY MCBRIDE, and SHEILA THOMSON

At the Club's Annual Soirée, held on 24 April 2004, at St. Basil's Church in Ottawa, awards were once again given to members, and one non-member, who distinguished themselves by accomplishments in the field of natural history and conservation, or by extraordinary activity within the Club.

Daniel Strickland – Honorary Member

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club takes great pleasure in honouring Daniel Strickland, not only for his renowned studies on Gray Jays, but also for the major role that he has played in fostering an appreciation and enjoyment of natural history by the general public.

Dan earned his Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Toronto, followed by his Master of Science from the University of Montreal, choosing as his thesis the life history of the Gray Jay, which he studied in La Verendrye Park in Quebec.

For more than thirty years, Dan has been studying and documenting Gray Jay behaviour in Algonquin Park, including the dynamics of the Gray Jay family unit, its nesting behaviour, winter survival and food gathering strategies. He is recognized world-wide as an authority on Gray Jays, and has co-authored the account on Gray Jays in the prestigious series, *The Birds of North America*.

In 1970, Dan became Chief Naturalist for Algonquin Park, a position he held until his retirement in 2001. Under his leadership, Algonquin Park's nature interpretation program has become renowned continent-wide. Tens of thousands of park visitors each year enjoy the Park's nature walks, public

As is frequently the case, there isn't a winner for every potential award and, this year, the Anne Hanes Natural History Award was not given. The following citations for those who did receive an award, however, were read to the members and guests assembled for the event.

wolf howls, and natural history slide presentations. In addition, seventeen self-guided nature trails, dozens of natural history publications on subjects as diverse as butterflies, mushrooms, mammals and lichens, as well as a world-class interpretive centre, all had their genesis under Dan Strickland's tenure as Chief Naturalist. In Algonquin Park's lively and informative publication, *The Raven*, Dan shared his broad knowledge and his fascination with nature in more than 300 articles. The interpretive programs he developed have contributed immeasurably to the goal of fostering public understanding and appreciation of nature.

Not the least of Dan Strickland's legacies is his impact on a whole generation of young park naturalists, trained under his guidance, who have moved on to new parks or to new fields of endeavour, profoundly influenced by Dan's insight and his enthusiasm for natural history. In recognition of his contributions to our knowledge of the natural history of Gray Jay, as well as his outstanding career in the field of nature interpretation and public education, it is a pleasure to confer Honorary Membership in the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club on Dan Strickland.

Colin Bowen – George McGee Service Award 2003

When Colin Bowen first joined the Birds Committee 13 years ago, committee members recognized a man who would do an excellent job at whatever he took on. Since then, he has put in countless hours of solid, thorough work to keep the OFNC's many bird-related materials coherent and accessible.

Colin is extremely well-organized. With his involvement, information management projects get done effectively. In the mid-90s the Birds Committee urgently needed to consolidate and properly archive over thirty years' worth of bird records and publications that were scattered in homes around the region. Colin formed the backbone of a team that worked for almost three years to bring it all together. He continues to maintain the archives so that, now, anyone can easily find what they need.

As secretary of the Bird Records Sub-committee, Colin has a major task on his hands. Sub-committee membership has changed many times since it first reconstituted itself in the mid-90s, but Colin has stayed. He receives all rare bird reports and prepares and redistributes them to committee members for review. He tracks all debates and decisions at meetings and prepares the sub-committee's minutes and reports. On top of all that, he set up and maintains the extensive cross-referenced bird records database and photo collection.

A visit to the OFNC's website will reveal fine examples of Colin's efforts to bring Ottawa bird resources to the Internet

and therefore to a broader community. Visitors can see the online tabular seasonal Ottawa bird checklist, the beautifully tabulated Christmas Bird Count results or the often-consulted Ottawa birding site guide, complete with maps.

Colin has volunteered for the Peregrine Falcon Watch and the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas. He has helped coordinate many Christmas and Fall Bird Counts. When out of town birders contact the club looking for birding information Colin is one of the generous volunteers who offer hours of their time to take them to our fine birding spots.

Colin does so much work for the Birds and Bird Records committees that we wonder how he finds time to do anything else... but he does. He is a devoted and highly-valued volunteer at the Canadian Museum of Nature and, together with his wife, Pat, were the featured volunteers in the museum's recent newsletter. He is a grandfather, an amateur genealogist, a traveller, and is taking up woodworking. He can also fix or build just about anything.

The OFNC thanks Colin for his tremendous contribution, and for retiring from his job with Bell Canada so he would have more time to come and work with us. He has truly never stopped, and we are proud to present him with this year's George McGee Service Award.

Daniel Brunton – Conservation Award for Members, 2003

The recipient of the 2003 Conservation Award for Members, Daniel Brunton, is an individual well known to members of the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club through his active role in Club affairs for over 20 years, including a term as President. Indeed, his name is familiar to many residents of the Ottawa region because he is frequently consulted and quoted as an expert naturalist and conservationist by the Ottawa media. Dan has been an ecological consultant since 1979. The award he is receiving today, however, has to do with only one of his many activities on behalf of wildlife and wild spaces in the region, namely, his role in the establishment of the RiverKEEPER project for the Ottawa River. Dan has done almost 200 studies along the river, both as a professional and amateur naturalist, making him eminently qualified to take this initiative.

The problems associated with keeping track of the positive and negative activities that impact the well-being of the Ottawa River demanded a new approach at coordination. With federal, two provincial, and dozens of municipal jurisdictions coming into play, and the high level of pollution affecting this crucial waterway, an initiative with vision was needed. Dan Brunton, together with some like-minded conservationists, particularly George Brown, a Law professor at

the University of Ottawa, and John Almstedt, got together to tackle the problem and recommended that the United States-based *RiverKEEPER Alliance* would provide the best framework within which to proceed. In the spring of 2001, a new Canadian chapter of RiverKEEPER was established with Dan as President. Its mission was to oversee the activities and legislation affecting the health of the river, and to report to the public. This would be done by hiring a full time *KEEPER*. Dan worked tirelessly to secure funding for the project and, after much work, succeeded in getting a three-year Trillium grant. In 2002, Laura Van Loon was appointed River KEEPER, launching the active phase of the project, and, in 2003, Dan was able to step down as President and allow others to carry on.

As a result of Dan Brunton's efforts and vision, the public now has a full-time ombudsman to look after the river, advocating compliance with environmental laws, responding to citizen complaints, identifying problems that affect the river, and suggesting remedies. We are all beneficiaries of these efforts and have Dan Brunton to thank for helping to get the project started. The OFNC is therefore very pleased to present him with this year's Conservation Award for Members.

Friends of the Jock River – Conservation Award for Non-Member, 2003

The OFNC Conservation Award, non-member, is given to a group or individual who has made an outstanding contribution in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley, with particular emphasis on activities within the Ottawa District.

The Jock River originates in the Goodwood Marsh approximately 50 kilometers west of Ottawa and empties into the Rideau River after winding through fields, villages, and the provincially significant Richmond Fen. Many species of fish, birds, mammals and other wildlife depend on this waterway for food, breeding sites and shelter. Over the years large areas of riparian vegetation have been destroyed causing severe silting of the river, which in turn has had a serious impact on flora and fauna of the river and its shoreline. The Friends of the Jock River, a non-profit, volunteer environmental organization, was formed to look at ways of protecting, restoring, and enhancing the Jock River and its watershed.

Working with local landowners, government agencies, recreational users and businesses, the Friends have engaged in numerous projects aimed at restoring the health of the river's ecosystem. The number and types of work they have undertaken is truly impressive.

The Friends have been planting native trees and shrubs at various sites along the river and this is helping restore sections of the river's shoreline to a more natural forested state. One example of their work is the Twin Elm restoration project. This project combines restoration planting with fencing of

livestock from the riverbank and installation of a nosepump to meet their needs. Another important project undertaken by the group is *The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) Stream Corridor Riparian Vegetation Survey*. With training provided by the Conservation Authority, they collected data according to OMNR stream survey protocols to determine the ecological health of the river and its shoreline habitat. These data will become part of the RVCA database, which, in turn, will be made available to the Friends on CD to help them plan further riparian restoration projects.

The Friends of the Jock River are involved with issues affecting the entire Jock River Watershed, thus they have been monitoring the ecology of the Richmond Conservation Area and advocating environmentally sound sewage treatment in Munster.

The group is working on detailed guidelines for all future projects, including erosion control, buffering run-off, and enhancing biodiversity in the watershed. They produce a quarterly newsletter, hold regular meetings to which the public is invited, and maintain an informative website.

For their dedicated, inspired, hard-working and thoughtful approach to protecting the health of the Jock River and its watershed, the OFNC is very pleased to give the Friends of the Jock River this Conservation Award.

[Brian Finch, the present President; Eric Snyder, the Secretary; and Neil Barrington, the Past President, accepted the award on behalf of the Friends of the Jock River.]

Pearl Peterkin – OFNC Member of the Year, 2003

This award is given to a member judged to have made significant contributions to the Club during the previous year. Looking back over the previous recipients of this award, it is illuminating to see the many and varied services performed for the Club. From rejuvenating committees, leading an exceptional number of walks, editing *Trail & Landscape*, web site design and maintenance, the list is endless. But one thing is clear: joining the ranks of these hard-working, dedicated souls is no small thing.

About ten years ago, it was decided to comb through back issues of *Trail & Landscape* and select those issues containing articles of significant interest and value (for example, special issues on Butterflies, Reptiles and Amphibians, etc.) and retain a stockpile of these issues to sell. Since that original exercise, however, many more articles of interest have been published and Pearl Peterkin decided it was time to go through another selection process. She brought her suggestion to the Education and Publicity Committee who heartily

endorsed it. A suggestion was made to bundle together all issues on a particular topic and sell them as sets. This meant dealing with the entire 35 year run of *Trail & Landscape*, finding all the relevant issues, combining them, creating multiple sets, pricing them, finding adequate storage space at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden centre and, of course, transporting the finished products to the monthly meetings. During the past year, Pearl was often found ensconced in the back room of the Fletcher Centre, surrounded by stacks of *Trail & Landscape*, creating order out of chaos. She has also spent a lot of time there organizing the Education and Publicity Committee's items so that they are more easily and quickly found.

But it wasn't only during 2003 that Pearl was active in Club affairs. Over the 15 years that Pearl has been an OFNC member, she has been involved with several club committees. In the 1990s she volunteered for three years with the Fletcher Wildlife Garden, becoming one of the stalwarts of this energetic group. In 2000 she took over as Chair of the Education and Publicity Committee at a time when the committee was at a low ebb with no leader. During her three years as Chair she successfully rejuvenated the committee, rounding up new members, finding judges for the Science Fair (which members of this Committee have been involved with for some time), finding volunteers to staff displays at various events, and doing all the other myriad jobs that keep a committee running

smoothly. Once the committee was up and running smoothly, Pearl decided to step down from that role and concentrate on other aspects of Education and Publicity committee work.

Many people probably recognize Pearl, even if they don't know her name, because she is the friendly face behind the OFNC sales table at the monthly meetings. It requires a serious commitment to attend every meeting, and, when people rely on you to be there, the responsibility is that much greater. Each month Pearl has to gather together the various sale items and, with the help of some other volunteers, transport them to and from the meeting. She also has to keep on top of new items (such as the new Bird Checklist), and make sure the stock of regular items is in good supply. This dedication has paid off, however, because during the last year the sales table has become a focus of much interest and activity.

In her spare time (what spare time, you may ask), Pearl is an enthusiastic and long time member of the Rideau Trail Association. She also volunteers for Bird Studies Canada's Loon Survey.

The OFNC is fortunate to have such enthusiastic and committed volunteers as Pearl Peterkin. For hard work on the *Trail & Landscape* project as well as all her involvement with the Education and Publicity Committee and her dedication to the club, we are pleased to give Pearl Peterkin the Member of the Year award for 2003.