

The Canadian Field-Naturalist

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club Awards for 2020

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

Due to COVID-19, the annual Awards Night ceremony was cancelled this year and awards were presented individually. 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. Five Club awards were conferred for 2020,

for: (1) fostering the development of amateur mycology in the Club, (2) efforts to preserve the Champlain oaks, (3) outstanding contributions to Canada's mollusc fauna, (4) making the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG) happen and service to the Club, and (5) a lifetime of natural history and conservation efforts in eastern Ontario and Canada.

Member of the Year: Joan Heyding and Ian Gough

In recognition of the member judged to have contributed the most to the Club in the previous year:

We are awarding Joan Heyding and Ian Gough Members of the Year, for fostering the development of amateur mycology in the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club (OFNC).

It's not easy to teach yourself mushrooms. For Joan, it started in 2014 when she photographed some mushrooms on her campsite and tried to identify them. She and Ian also found fungi flourishing in the forest near their cabin, studied field guides, and attended the annual Fabulous Fall Fungi workshops led by Richard Aaron at the Queens University Biological Station. In 2017, at Richard Aaron's suggestion, they reached out to local alumni of the workshops to ask if they wanted to foray occasionally. Joan invited everyone for a walk in Gatineau Park. About eight people showed up, enjoyed each other's company, and chatted about forming the Ottawa Mycology Circle. Ian created an online home for the new group to share photos and plans.

In the spring of 2018, Joan and Ian invited the group for a supper meeting at a friendly tavern to plan a few outings. Over the year, the circle grew to over 30 people and there was talk about how to share the group's enthusiasm with other naturalists in the region. Should they plant a foothold within the OFNC?

OFNC's directors welcomed the prospect of hosting more fungal events. So, in early 2019, Joan and Ian joined the Club and encouraged others in the Circle to do so. They rallied people to share their interests and lead an activity. A steady stream of fungal events ensued. Joan brought photos to OFNC's 2019

Photo Night. One member led a seminar on Beatrix Potter's watercolour paintings of fungi in February. Another gave a talk on mycorrhizal fungi in March. Joan co-led a workshop in April on wood-inhabiting fungi. In June, members forayed in a forest near Calabogie and identified their fungal finds at a member's cabin.

To prepare a fall fungal season, Joan and Ian convened another planning supper in August 2019. Members stepped up to lead forays in Calabogie and at the MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre. The group hosted two workshops at the Fletcher Resource Centre: first, an introductory talk and review of participants' mystery mushrooms, and secondly, a seminar on Arctic fungi.

Joan and Ian continued to anchor and organize more fungal events in 2020. There was a dinner-and-movie night, a lichen walk at Dewberry Trail in January, and two joint lectures for the OFNC and the RA (Recreation Association of the Public Service of Canada) Canoe Camping Club on fungal themes. Joan, Ian, and a third member authored one of them, on Poisonous Mushrooms. In March 2020, Ian created a new online forum for OFNC's fungi fans: <https://forum.mycoott.org/>.

There were no forays during the COVID-19 lockdown in spring 2020. However, the forum could meet every few weeks for an evening of Shroom Zoom. During the cautious months of summer and early fall, the group remained active with six small socially-distanced walks and monthly chats on various fungal themes. Three members offered digital presentations to the OFNC membership: an Introduction to Fungi,

a talk on Molds, and a talk on Ergot and Choke Disease Fungi.

Joan and Ian have enabled the fungal enthusiasts of OFNC to find and teach each other as they explore the fungal kingdom. With planning meetings, follow-up,

encouragement, and communication tools, they have fostered the emergence of an active and growing community of shroomers. We're glad they did.

(Prepared by Lynn Ovenden)

Conservation Award—Non-Member: Daniel Buckles and Debra Huron

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

The 2020 award goes to two particularly deserving individuals, Daniel Buckles and Debra Huron, for their long dedication to the historic Bur Oak trees in the Champlain Park neighbourhood of Ottawa.

Bur Oaks are slow-growing and majestic trees, and those in Champlain Park are of a venerable age, with one confirmed to be more than 190 years old; they are descendants of an old-growth oak forest as indicated by the informative Champlain Oaks website (<https://www.champlainoaks.net/>).

The oaks are a source of pride in the area; however, recent development has seen the removal of several gigantic oaks, much against the wishes of the established neighbourhood. This motivated Daniel Buckles and Debra Huron to initiate and organize the Champlain Oaks Project in 2010, bringing together a volunteer group of neighbours to celebrate, preserve, and restore the historic oak forest in Ottawa's west end. Daniel and Debra, as the animators and catalysts, have ensured the engagement and momentum of the group.

Raising awareness of the heritage value and history of the old Bur Oaks and current threats to them is an important way to garner support for preserving the trees. Daniel and Debra conceived the idea for, and provided coordinated, effective leadership to complete, the informative oak display at the Champlain Park Field House: outside, a slice of a giant Bur Oak that was lost to development is displayed; and inside, a timeline of the tree history of the neighbourhood is presented. Daniel and Debra have tirelessly promoted the Champlain oaks directly to City of Ottawa forestry staff, on National Tree Day events, with the children from the local school, through their City Councillor, and in the media.

Thanks to Daniel's and Debra's efforts, in 2017 and 2018, seven ancient Bur Oaks were named Heritage Trees—complete with heritage plaques—by

Forests Ontario. To gain this commemorative designation, Daniel and Debra had rallied support from neighbours and tree-lovers and environmentalists from across the city. In 2019, they organized a Jane's Walk to celebrate the Heritage Trees.

A crucial means of protection for mature trees is the City of Ottawa's *Tree Protection By-law*, recently consolidated and strengthened, and the updated Urban Forest Management Plan. Daniel coordinated community input to both of these initiatives to ensure that the needs of the Champlain oaks were considered. He also coordinated local comments on the City's tree planting plans in their neighbourhood.

Daniel spearheaded the Champlain Park community's adoption of *Neighbourwoods*, a community-based tree inventory, monitoring, and stewardship planning program. Training of volunteers was provided, a good amount of tree inventory data were collected, and two educational infographics were produced.

Maintaining the unique genetic diversity of the heritage oak trees is important due to their adaptations to conditions in the area. To this end, Daniel and Debra maintain a backyard nursery of baby Bur Oaks grown from acorns of heritage trees. The saplings are available for tree planting in the neighbourhood. Daniel, Debra, and the local Environment Committee volunteers also produced a brochure, *Planting Trees in Small Spaces*, that was distributed throughout the community.

Mapping Ottawa's Lost Trees is another project initiated by Daniel and Debra. They piloted its precursor prior to the city-wide launch by partners in 2018. It is an interactive mapping tool that will help keep track of what is being lost from the urban forest and is planned to be linked to other mapping tools.

The OFNC is pleased to confer the Conservation Award for a Non-Member to Daniel Buckles and Debra Huron.

(Prepared by Eleanor Zurbrigg and Christine Hanrahan with input from Erwin Dreesen)

Honorary Member: Robert G. Forsyth

This award is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions by a member or non-member to Canadian natural history or to the successful operation of the Club. Usually, people awarded an honor-

ary membership have made extensive contributions over many years.

Gastropods could be considered one of the world's misunderstood group of creatures. It was once said:

Most people dismiss them as slimy, slow-moving creatures seldom worth a second thought. Because they are small and reclusive, we seldom notice them, unless they become pests in our gardens.

Historically this has been the situation in Canada. However, they include serious invasives, valuable prey, important predators, informative indicators, native species at risk, and potential sources of bio-products of great value to people.

Slugs or snails are not easy to identify, especially without experience. To successfully identify them, one must have the following: means to see the animal and its diagnostic structures (many are very small and difficult to see with the naked eye); an adult (diagnostic keys use adult characters and because juveniles do not have them, they cannot be identified); a steady hand when dissection is required for identification; literature; and, if you are lucky, some formal training. Because it takes a lot of work to master these organisms, it is understandable why so few people take on the task. Robert Forsyth found them fascinating and challenging. Without his interest, we would not have a dedicated Canadian expert on this very important group.

Robert's knowledge of these organisms is vast, and his contribution to expanding our understanding of the Canadian mollusc fauna is extensive. He has authored, or contributed to, many scientific papers, several technical reports, Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) reports, species assessment summaries, numerous popular articles, as well as two books.

The bulk of his work initially involved collecting and identifying molluscs from British Columbia. He has since worked on species in every province and territory. Throughout his studies, he has documented populations of native species, discovered new distributions and/or range extensions/contractions, compiled checklists, and reported on new non-native and potentially invasive species. He has cooperated with more than 100 people while doing this work. Two books, *Land Snails of British Columbia* and *Identifying Land Snails and Slugs in Canada*, are excellent identification tools because they include keys to genera and species, distribution data, habitat and ecology information, and lots of pictures and drawings. They have been proven so useful, that they are used routinely by federal inspectors when snails are found on imported and domestic goods. Many of his specimens can be found in the Royal British Columbia Museum and the New Brunswick Museum and serve as vouchers for mollusc research.

Robert was a member of Mollusc Species Spe-

cialist Subcommittee for COSEWIC from 2001 until 2020 and served as Co-chair from 2007 to 2010. COSEWIC is responsible for providing a science-based status assessment of species found in Canada to determine if a species is at risk of extinction and the threats to their continued existence. It was his in-depth knowledge of Canada's terrestrial mollusc fauna that made him a valuable member of this organization for so long. All of the 20 terrestrial snails and slugs so far assessed by COSEWIC have been dealt with while he was part of the subcommittee, including 17 species that are at risk or are no longer found living in Canada. A status report on another terrestrial snail, confined to Cypress Hills in Saskatchewan and Alberta, is scheduled to be assessed in April 2021. His knowledge on molluscs, however, extends far beyond just the terrestrials and includes freshwater as well as marine gastropods. Overall, Robert has made a very significant contribution to the conservation of molluscs in Canada.

Robert also developed and maintains the website www.mollus.ca where people can find information on 22 families of slugs and snails found in North America and 44 non-native species. To date there are 69 posts featuring various species, all of which contain fantastic images. The website also provides useful keys to genera and species in Canada, information on how to collect specimens, and where to donate samples collected.

He has been an OFNC member since 2000, but in 2019 he became the graphic artist/designer, responsible for the layout of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* (CFN) starting with volume 133. His formal training as a graphic and visual artist as well as his self-taught expertise on molluscs has resulted in his doing layout and technical editing for not only CFN, but for several international malacological journals.

Robert's extensive knowledge has made him an authority on terrestrial molluscs of Canada, and one of the foremost experts of its western fauna. His achievements are especially noteworthy, considering the difficulty of the group. What may be more astonishing is that his knowledge was acquired without any formal training. It has been through Robert Forsyth's interest and dedication to these fascinating, often unnoticed creatures that we have come to know so much more about one of Canada's least known faunal groups in a short period of time.

It is with pleasure that the OFNC awards Robert Forsyth Honorary Membership for his outstanding contributions to Canada's mollusc fauna.

(Prepared by Karen McLachlan Hamilton with input from Dwayne Lepitzki and Paul Catling)

Honorary Member: Jeffery E. Harrison

This award is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions by a member or non-member to Canadian natural history or to the successful operation of the Club. Usually, people awarded an honorary membership have made extensive contributions over many years.

The FWG is without doubt, the public face of the OFNC. Many people first discover the club through visits to the garden. Jeff Harrison was intimately connected with the garden from its early days and even though no longer living in Ottawa, still maintains a keen interest in the site and is always ready to answer queries about the genesis of the garden or provide ideas.

The FWG was initially envisaged as a way for the OFNC to celebrate "Wildlife 87", an initiative of the Canadian Wildlife Service with the goal of emphasizing the conservation of wildlife and its habitat. Peter Hall conceived the idea of a wildlife garden and together with several other OFNC members, chose the location on the Central Experimental Farm. At that point, Jeff who was on the OFNC Council (now Board) and soon to become OFNC President, became chief promoter of the FWG. His enthusiasm for the project was contagious and profound. Working with members of the OFNC sub-committee responsible for the FWG, he threw himself into developing plans and guidelines for the garden, the ideas coming fast and furious. He enlisted numerous volunteers to help the project get underway and then to carry it forward. Once he became chair of the FWG, he kept enthusiasm high and inspired volunteers. He also focussed on developing various habitats for local wildlife in the garden, such as the Backyard Garden, with the aim of showing landowners how to manage sites for wildlife. His endless devotion to the project helped transform the site into the well-loved, well-visited site of today, a place for OFNC committees to meet, and where the Club can conduct its business.

Jeff has long been passionate about nature as evidenced by the column, *The Urban Naturalist*, he and his wife Victoria Dickenson wrote throughout the 1990's for *The Ottawa Citizen*. For their work promoting nature and the environment, they were awarded a City of Ottawa Whitton Award for Environment in

1996. He has also written extensively about the natural history of the Avalon Peninsula in Newfoundland, an area he knows well, having summered there for many years. For the last 20 years Jeff has been involved in researching and writing the history of ornithology in Canada, with a particular emphasis on Charles Fothergill, a Toronto politician who wrote many articles on the birds of southern Ontario between about 1820–1840.

Originally from Toronto where he became an avid birder, Jeff developed wanderlust as a young man and travelled the world for five years, including a lengthy stay in Australia. The travel bug continued for some time as he then went on to lead nature tours to many exotic parts of the world, although his specialty was the birds and nature of Belize.

In 1997, Jeff came up with the grand idea of holding a birding competition similar to ones south of the border that would "raise money for environmental projects and raise awareness of the great diversity and richness of wildlife habitats in eastern Ontario and western Quebec". He called it The Taverner Cup (after Percy Taverner, the early Canadian ornithologist) and convinced the OFNC to make it a Club activity. Jeff found a number of sponsors and volunteers for the event, promoted it enthusiastically, attracted numerous participants, and MC'd the event for each of the eight years the competition ran.

Jeff Harrison was OFNC President during 1989 and 1990. He also participated in local Christmas Bird Counts and wrote articles for the OFNC publication *Trail & Landscape*.

Jeff's interest in nature encompasses many areas. He was the founder and coordinator of the Newfoundland and Labrador Wilderness Society, served as Vice President Bird Protection Quebec, and was a member of the Board of Directors of the Ontario Field Ornithologists, Secretary for the Toronto Ornithological Club, and was the OFNC representative on the Board of Ontario Nature for several years.

For all these reasons it gives us great pleasure to award Jeff Harrison Honorary Membership in the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club.

(Prepared by Christine Hanrahan with Peter Hall)

Honorary Members: Fred Schueler and Aleta Karstad

This award is presented in recognition of outstanding contributions by a member or non-member to Canadian natural history or to the successful operation of the Club. Usually, people awarded an honorary membership have made extensive contributions over many years.

Fred Schueler and his wife, Aleta Karstad, are well known to naturalists and nature lovers in the Ottawa Region. They have been a team for over 47 years, documenting events and changes in the natural world here in the Valley and throughout Canada. Not only have they made observations, collected data

and specimens, and made drawings and paintings all across the country, but in 2009, 30 years after their first survey trips, they returned to many of these areas to re-access the natural history, their “Thirty Years Later Expedition”.

Fred became a member of the OFNC in 1971, soon after coming to Ottawa to work at the Canadian Museum of Nature. Although Fred’s interests were primarily focused on reptiles and amphibians (his Ph.D. thesis was on Leopard Frog), he became expert in many other fields of natural history including malacology and botany. Being a talented and dedicated observer, Fred created a working database of observations on everything from road-kills to invasive plants and animals such as giant reedgrass and Zebra Mussels. Much of Fred’s work has been done on contract with the Canadian Museum of Nature where he is the Museum’s longest serving Research Associate. His research and other carefully documented observations have resulted in 32 publications, books, and reports.

Aleta Karstad is acknowledged as one of Canada’s most talented wildlife artists. Her works of art adorn many homes and public spaces and have illustrated her popular books, including *Canadian Nature Notebook*, *Wild Season’s Daybook*, and *A Place to Walk* as well as, more recently, a memory card game, *Nature-Match*. She has received several awards for her art and conservation work, including the Environmental Scientist of the Year (2010) from the Canadian Geographic Society and Robert Bateman Award (2018) from the Canadian Wildlife Federation.

Their conservation work has been far-reaching and influential, from Cumshewa Head on Haida Gwaii and the rivers crossed by the Energy East Pipeline from Alberta to New Brunswick, to northeastern Ontario and the Dumoine River in Quebec. They’ve also worked with citizen groups protesting habitat destruction throughout eastern Ontario, discovered or predicted most of the new Species at Risk mussel populations in eastern Ontario, and have worked with official bodies on the conservation of Kemptville Creek, the Limerick Forest, and New Brunswick’s Protected Natural Areas. Especially notable is their

on-going collaboration with the South Nation Conservation Authority’s Fish and Wildlife Committee with regard to the South Nation River.

Fred and Aleta’s conservation work was acknowledged in 2018 by their receiving the Glen Davis Conservation Leadership Prize from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the World Wildlife Fund-Canada. Aleta and Fred, with their typical generosity and selflessness, plan to use the \$10000 in prize money to upgrade their database and make it more accessible to the public and other researchers.

Mention must be made of Aleta and Fred’s tireless efforts in nature education for which they received the 2011 OFNC Mary Stuart Education Award. Fred’s “Mudpuppy Night” in Bishop’s Mills has been a popular annual event for decades. They’ve also published popular natural history books and run the NatureList & OREGlist, e-mail list-serves for natural history and road ecology. In addition, Fred is a regular contributor to several Facebook groups, answering questions pertaining to nature, and he has written several articles for *Trail & Landscape*. Fred and Aleta were instrumental in the creation of the Eastern Ontario Biodiversity Museum in Kemptville, in part, to save the threatened collections at Carleton University. Although that project couldn’t be sustained, they are presently operating the Bishop Mill’s Natural History Centre to house their personal natural history collection of four to five million specimens.

In recognition of these impressive accomplishments over many years, the OFNC is proud to welcome Aleta Karstad and Frederick W. Schueler as Honorary Members.

(Prepared by Irwin M. Brodo, acknowledging an article by Paulina Hrebacka from InsideOttawaValley.com, the CPAWS citation for the Glen Davis Award, and

a biographic sketch of Aleta Karstad by Nature Artists website, http://www.natureartists.com/artists/artist_biography.asp?ArtistID=40, accessed 25 December 2020.)