

The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club Awards for 2009, presented April 2010

KEN ALLISON, IRWIN BRODO, JULIA CIPRIANI, CHRISTINE HANRAHAN, and ELEANOR ZURBRIGG

At the Club's Annual Soiree, held on 17 April 2010, 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. The following five citations for those who received an award were read to the members and guests assembled for the event.

Honorary Member: Dr. Fenja Brodo

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.

Dr. Fenja Brodo has served the natural history community on many fronts. As an English major at City College in New York city, Fenja took a biology course for non-science students led by Alexander Klots, the author of the first Peterson guide to butterflies. In her own words, "She was hooked." She graduated in biology in 1958. In the mid-sixties she earned a masters degree at University of Kansas with a study of crane flies under the guidance of the well-known crane fly expert, George Byers. After the Brodos moved to Ottawa, Fenja pursued her studies at Carleton University. The subject of her 1984 doctoral thesis was an Arctic group of crane flies. She has worked with the Geological Survey doing insect inventories on Ellesmere Island as part of a team of field biologists. Fenja is presently a Research Associate at the Canadian Museum of Nature and continues her taxonomic research at her well-equipped lab at home. Over the past 45 years, she amassed a large insect reference collection which she enthusiastically shares.

Fenja has been active in the club since 1966 when she joined as a family member. She led her first outing, a general insects field trip, on July 15, 1967. After making her skills as an editor known, Fenja was asked to take over as the fourth editor of *Trail and Landscape* (T&L) in time for the first issue of 1991. She fulfilled the role until the second T&L of 2001 when the job was handed over to Karen McLachlan-Hamilton, the current editor. Fenja did take a bit of break from T&L in the early '90s when she lived in Scandinavia.

Fenja was deeply involved with the Eastern Ontario Biodiversity Museum in Kemptville as a Board member and as a program leader. Its demise occurred despite her heroic efforts to keep it going. Thanks to her extensive network, she did find homes for the collection.

Her stint as editor of T&L heightened her interest in the Excursions and Lectures Committee. She was drawn to the possibility of adding more events to the roster. She left the editor's position armed with an enviable rolodex disguised as a recipe box which holds the names and telephone numbers of who's who of Ottawa-area and beyond naturalists. Fenja became a member of Excursions and Lectures Committee and assumed the role of Chair in 2003. She was formally recognized in that role in 2004. In 2009 Fenja handed that committee over to Christine Wong and accepted the nomination of Vice President for 2010. Fenja remains active in the Excursions and Lectures Committee, hosting planning meetings to share information and generate ideas.

It is her mission to spark children's interest in the natural world. Fenja is quick to credit the efforts and contributions of others and demonstrates a great respect for and curiosity about what others have to say. She radiates contagious passion for the natural world, especially one populated with crane flies in any state of their development. Whether she is leading or participating in an outing, she brings enthusiasm and excitement and takes delight in sharing her knowledge. These characteristics may be witnessed if you happen to be a participant with Fenja in the Annual Butterfly Count.

Her husband, Ernie, describes Fenja as a "wonderful teacher". An indication of her capacity to influence others is reflected in the quote Barry Bendell, a seniors' leader with Macoun, left on the Macoun site from his days in that club, "I can clearly remember the first larva I ever saw. Fenja Brodo caught it and showed it to me. Then, what I had only known from books became a living, breathing thing. I was not learning what a dragonfly larva looked like. I already knew that. Instead the larva became part of my own experience in a way that things in books could never be."

Thank you, Fenja. It is a pleasure and privilege to award Fenja Brodo an Honorary Membership in the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club.

(Written by Julia Cipriani, based on an interview with and input from Fenja Brodo, revisions and additions received from Irwin Brodo.)

Honorary Member: Dr. Paul M. Catling

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.

Dr. Paul M. Catling, one of Canada's most distinguished plant taxonomists, is a man of many talents and interests. Many who know him as a botanist are surprised to learn of his accomplishments in entomology, and the reverse is also true. He is an outstanding speaker and popularist, authoring dozens of articles of general interest on a variety of topics.

Dr. Catling received his doctorate in plant systematics from the University of Toronto in 1980 and has worked as a Research Scientist with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) ever since. He is the Curator of the Agriculture Canada herbarium, Canada's largest plant collection, with over a million flowering plant specimens. Dr. Catling has authored over 200 refereed scientific articles and co-authored several books. He is internationally known for his work on the classification and ecology of plants and insects, and is widely recognized as an expert on hybridization and pollination biology. Much of Dr. Catling's work at AAFC has involved economically important plants, particularly aquatics, forages, berry crops, and invading alien weeds. He has also worked towards the protection of economically important threatened native Canadian plants, and has participated in national and international committees concerned with plant conservation. Dr. Catling has served as President of the Canadian Botanical Association, and he received their prestigious George Lawson medal in 2005 for his contributions to Canadian botany. He has been an Adjunct Professor and a Member of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of Ottawa since 1989. He has received awards for education in botany and for work on Canadian endangered species, and several species have been named in his honour.

Members of a club such as the OFNC couldn't find a better role model. Dr. Catling is one of eastern Canada's most productive and active field naturalists with an unsurpassed diversity of interests, producing (and publishing) hundreds of studies on alvars, orchids, aquatic plants, invasive weeds, birds, reptiles (especially snakes), lepidoptera, dragonflies and beetles and

more. He is an inspirational example of broad-mined curiosity and investigation in an era of sadly narrow specialization.

Paul's interests in local and Canada-wide conservation are no less impressive. He has been a long-time, significant voice in conservation initiatives in Ottawa, Ontario and across Canada through participation in COSEWIC (Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada), with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (as a Board member) and through involvement with regional organizations such as the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club (OFNC) and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists. Paul has always been ready to provide informed assistance to those seriously interested in the study, appreciation and most importantly, the *conservation* of natural features and habitats, regardless of their professional status or position.

An active member of the OFNC since 1982, Paul served on Council in 1980s and was Vice-President from 1982 until 1984. He was a member of both Conservation and Excursions & Lectures committees and has been an Associate Editor (Botany) of *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* since 1997. He contributed many articles to club publications and acted as a leader in many OFNC excursions. Paul was much involved in major conservation issues such as the Alfred Bog and the Burnt Lands.

Paul's generosity with time, expertise and resources extends back to his student days in Toronto and Algonquin Park, and continues today. He works formally and informally with many such associates in his scientific and conservation work. He offers an exceptional example of the appropriate application of superior field-based science in the promotion and achievement of significant conservation goals. His efforts continue to provide substantial, permanent contributions to the appreciation and protection of native Canadian biodiversity and inspire others to do likewise.

It is a pleasure and privilege to award him an Honorary Membership in the Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club.

(Written by Irwin M. Brodo, based on material from NRC Research Press, and comments from Dan Brunton and Francis Cook.)

The George McGee Service Award: Gretchen and Tony Denton

This award is given in recognition of members who have contributed significantly to the smooth running of the Club over several years.

Gretchen and Tony Denton have been volunteering at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden (FWG) for at least 12 years. Their dedication to the project is remarkable and there is little that they have not turned their hands to over this time. Soon after retiring, Tony was inspired

to begin volunteering after participating in a spring birding tour of the garden led by Jeff Harrison. Gretchen joined him as a volunteer very soon thereafter.

Gretchen is a mainstay of the volunteer force at the FWG. When we need FWG volunteers to help out with events, be it the Wildlife Festival exhibit at Billings Bridge, the Annual Christmas Party at the garden, or any other similar event, Gretchen is the one who con-

tacts and coordinates the volunteers. She is also a regular part of the Backyard Garden (BYG) group. Tony is the lead on buckthorn control, as well as being generally, a very handy person who helps out with tool maintenance, building, and repair jobs. Take a look at the bench dedicated to Dale Crook in the BYG and the bench in the Butterfly Meadow. Tony is largely responsible for the design and creation of both.

Some little while after joining the FWG volunteers, Tony began working with Dale Crook to remove the invasive buckthorn shrubs. When Dale became too ill to continue, Tony took over and has been working on this from spring through fall for at least nine years. Thanks to his efforts we have seen a great reduction in this species at the garden. Tony is very good at rounding up willing volunteers and he often has a good group on Friday mornings to help him. He also comes in at other times to work on the buckthorn project, sometimes for long hours alone. Visitors often stop to ask what he is doing and Tony is always willing to take a break and explain. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing this serious invasive shrub and has used his hands-on knowledge of buckthorn control to help others, such as community groups, in tackling this problem.

Gretchen too, has learned a lot about invasive species through her work at FWG, and like Tony, has taken this

knowledge and helped others to respond to the threat of problem species. She has commented that in her own neighbourhood she has spread the word about the problems presented by species such as garlic mustard, dog-strangling vine, and of course, buckthorn.

We maintain two bird feeders at FWG during the winter and Tony ensures that they are always filled so no bird has to go hungry. He also performs regular maintenance on the feeders, and when one was vandalized, he built and installed a new one.

With all that Gretchen and Tony do for the FWG, it is good to know that they believe they receive as much as they give. One of the perks of volunteering at the garden is listening to birds and watching wildlife as they work. They definitely enjoy the good company of fellow volunteers at the garden, and appreciate the relaxed atmosphere the FWG provides.

We believe that both Tony and Gretchen have made remarkable contributions, both in terms of service to the club through their work at FWG, and to the furthering of knowledge of invasive species through their outreach work in their neighbourhood and beyond. For all of these reasons, the OFNC is pleased to present this award to Gretchen and Tony Denton.

(Written by Christine Hanrahan)

Conservation Award – Non-Member: Meredith Brown

The Conservation Award – Non-Member is given in recognition of an outstanding contribution by a non-member in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley.

Meredith Brown is the Executive Director of Ottawa Riverkeeper. This organization is “an independent voice for the Ottawa River, working to protect, promote and improve its ecological health and future”. Ottawa Riverkeeper was founded in 2001. In its relatively short existence, Ottawa Riverkeeper has almost single-handedly raised the profile of the Ottawa River and its conservation needs to extraordinary heights. This was particularly evident when faulty City of Ottawa structures poured over a billion litres of raw sewage into the river in July 2009. The issue was politically charged and could easily have spun out of control as various levels of government fought over who was most responsible. Meredith Brown was a voice of reason throughout the crisis, being called upon by the public and the media

to sort the science from the hyperbole. This resulted in a calm, fact-based response to a long-standing problem, and a major commitment of funds from all levels of government for the enhancement of the quality of the Ottawa River. Meredith played a major role in keeping the public debate on the river’s needs firmly science based. Regionally and nationally significant natural environment features and functions across the entire lower Ottawa River watershed have benefited as a result.

We believe that Meredith has made an outstanding contribution in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley. After all, the Valley would not exist without the river which Ottawa Riverkeeper works to protect. For this reason, the OFNC is pleased to present this award to Meredith Brown.

(Written by Ken Allison, based on input from Dan Brunton)

Mary Stuart Education Award: Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre (Donna DuBreuil)

The Mary Stuart Education Award was established to recognize members, non-members or organizations for their outstanding achievements in the field of natural history education in the Ottawa Region.

The award for 2009 is presented to the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre (OCWC) and its president, Donna DuBreuil, for their efforts to educate people

about wildlife and to help foster an appreciation for the natural world as well as to give people the basic tools to solve human/wildlife conflicts in a humane and cost-effective way.

First and foremost, this award recognizes the Centre’s successful Wildlife Education School Program, launched some years ago to help children take the first

crucial steps in conservation, coexisting and appreciating wildlife in their own backyard. This education program is both unique in providing a presence in Ottawa area classrooms (from grades Junior Kindergarten to eight) and exceptionally timely in its mission to reconnect children to the natural world. A large part of the program's success results from the special perspective that Centre takes into classrooms. Not only are Donna DuBreuil and Kate MacNeil, the Education Coordinator, passionate about wildlife but they also have firsthand experience gained during years of doing wildlife rehabilitation. Their personal accounts of amazing animal stories intrigue students and help them relate to wildlife.

Secondly, this award recognizes the outstanding efforts of the OCWC and Donna and Gary DuBreuil to raise awareness of the general public and city officials as well, on the premise that many instances of human/wildlife conflict can be avoided if there is a better understanding and appreciation for wildlife so that actions are taken to mitigate the impact of development and human encroachment into wildlife habitat. They maintain an informative wildlife website on how to deal with wildlife problems, and produce an informative newsletter available in hard copy and on their website. They work with individuals and community groups to

resolve situations of conflict with wildlife, as for example, working with the Graham Creek community on problem beaver. Our club has also sought advice from the OCWC — when a young beaver turned up in the Amphibian Pond at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden and began cutting trees, making a dam and a bank burrow, we were not sure how to deal with this situation for various reasons. Donna provided a lot of support, valuable help, and information.

Donna writes many articles on wildlife in Ottawa community newspapers. Donna with The Greenbelt Coalition is working to raise awareness of City of Ottawa officials on the need for a comprehensive wildlife strategy focused on development planning and public education as a necessary component in the face of urban development which continues to move out into wildlife habitat, and that community consultation needs to be part of its development to educate new rural dwellers on wildlife around their new homes.

The OFNC is pleased to present the Mary Stuart Education Award to the Ottawa-Carleton Wildlife Centre and its president, Donna DuBreuil.

(Written by Eleanor Zurbrigg with review comments from Christine Hanrahan)