

Colin Stewart Conservation Award presented April 7, 2016 to David Patriquin at the Museum of Natural History on behalf of Halifax Field Naturalists.

I am humbled to present the Colin Stewart Conservation Award to a truly innovative and indeed transformative conservationist: David Patriquin. Many of us already know him well and know how deserving he is of this recognition. But we know also how modest he is, and for that reason most of us still don't know more than a small part of all that he has contributed to conservation locally, regionally, and province wide. To give the broad picture (and to keep this presentation within six minutes) I have divided his accomplishments into three categories.

The first category is his unremunerated conservation effort toward Protection of the Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area under the NS Wilderness Areas Protection Act, achieved in October 2011 in no small part due to Dave's giving the scientific basis for protection. In the words of Peter Labor, Director, Protected Areas & Ecosystems Branch, NS Environment (letter of October 14, 2014):

"I am aware of many ways in which Dave has made significant contributions to the conservation and understanding of nature over the years. However, I would like to highlight his exceptional work from 2008-2011 in support of efforts by the Chebucto Wilderness Coalition to secure the protection of lands now known as Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area. Dave's unwavering commitment to making the scientific case for the protection of this area was instrumental in advancing this area for legal protection by the province, and has provided a wealth of information that will help guide the management of this area well into the future.

"As an expansive near-urban wilderness area, this area has become one of the premier sites in our provincial protected areas system, and the quality of work and leadership undertaken by Dave is not only important for this site, but serves as an example of how high quality scientific inquiry and reporting can lead to provincially and nationally significant conservation achievements."

The second category is Dave's leadership in the development and maintenance of more than a dozen community-based volunteer environmental organizations. To give you an idea of the scope of his contributions I will quickly read the names of the groups I know with names of group leaders who have documented his role in each:

Halifax Field Naturalists (Bob McDonald),
Chebucto Wilderness Coalition Steering Committee (Tom Musial),
"Buy Back the Mersey" Coalition (Geoff LeBoutillier, Dusan Soudek),
Woodens River Watershed Environmental Organization (WRWEO) & The
Bluff Wilderness Hiking Trail (Nanci Lee, Paul Berry, Jim Carwardine,
Richmond Campbell),
Nova Scotia Wild Flora Society (Charlie Cron),
Young Naturalists Club (Karen McKendry, Bob Bancroft),

Five Bridge Wilderness Heritage Trust (Beth McGee),
 Purcell's Cove/Williams L./Herring Cove Backlands Coalition (Kathleen Hall,
 Nathan Brett, Nick Hill, Bob McDonald, Nanci Lee, Dusan Soudek),
 Our HRM Alliance, especially regarding RP+5 (Geoff LeBoutillier, Raymond
 Plourde, Nathan Brett, Paul Berry),
 Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Protected Area (Bob McDonald, Nanci Lee),
 Purcell's Cove Neighborhood Committee (Nathan Brett),
 St. Margaret's Bay Stewardship Association (Jim Carwardine, Beth McGee),
 Ecology Action Centre (Raymond Plourde).

In each case there are letters from central figures in these organizations detailing Dave's contributions. I have collected the letters, eighteen of them, and have permission from the authors to present them to Dave with the award.

Third, and by no means least, is the important large category of conservation education that Dave has carried out through: (a) the above organizations, (b) nature events, such as WRWEO guided walks or the "bio-cache" challenge with Girl Guides in 2014, (c) various scientific background papers to support local conservation efforts such as the large report "Ecological Assessment of the Plant Communities of the Williams Lake Backlands" (co-authored with Nick Hill) that resulted in a motion passed by HRM Council for developers to meet with home owners, (d) unsolicited letters to various levels of government regarding forestry, bio-mass harvesting, and the mainland moose population, (e) numerous nature talks given at public meetings, and (f) contributions to the Wildland Writers group and to the Chronicle Herald's Nova Scotian Section entitled "Nova Scotia Naturally".

Even this diverse list of areas of conservation education does not begin to convey the depth of Dave's impact in Nova Scotia. Let me close with two short paragraphs from a letter from Oliver Maass, Policy and Program Coordinator, Protected Areas & Ecosystems Branch, NS Environment (letter of October 21, 2014), regarding Dave's influence on farming.

"As I recall, around that time [late 1980s] he had shifted his research efforts from understanding nitrogen fixation in marine systems to agricultural systems. He recognized that understanding nitrogen cycling in agricultural systems is critical to supporting ecologically sustainable agriculture. David wanted to make a difference in a practical way. But those were hard years. His work with farmers, doing on-farm research, was pioneering, even as it was ridiculed by the agricultural research establishment. His work was considered radical as it did not conform to accepted notions of progress. David had difficulty obtaining funding and his reputation suffered. Yet he persisted.

"I had the privilege of working as assistant with some of his on-farm research. It was the real thing. Along with a few other researchers, there I also met highly innovative farmers who were figuring out how to apply

ecological understanding and save money at the same time. All of them were running against the grain, yet doing the right thing. Thanks to David and fellow visionaries, mainstream agricultural research has since come a long way towards accepting the value of ecologically-sane agriculture.”

We owe David Patriquin much for his tireless efforts to conserve what we all hold to be priceless in the nature around us and for inspiring our lives with his example.

Dave, we thank you and congratulate you.

Richmond Campbell
Co-founder of WRWEO