



## The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

### 2012 Conservation Award - Member: David Seburn

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David Seburn is an independent researcher specializing in the conservation of amphibians and reptiles, particularly turtles. This award recognizes David's significant efforts for over a decade in turtle research and conservation in the Ottawa area.

Work on turtles is crucial, as seven of Ontario's eight turtle species are on the Species at Risk in Ontario list. Threats include habitat loss and fragmentation, road mortality, persecution, illegal collection for the pet trade and pollution.

In 2011-12, David did yeoman's service as a diligent local advocate for the campaign to get the Ontario government to protect Snapping Turtles from hunting. Although the campaign was not successful, local efforts such as

David's help to highlight the issue and raise awareness for OFNC members by providing information and advocating for change. David has also been involved in the OFNC's advocacy efforts to influence the City of Ottawa to promote conservation of Blanding's Turtles threatened by the Terry Fox Drive/South March development.

David's research and monitoring of turtles in the Ottawa region has produced significant results. For example, surveys he conducted of Spotted Turtles - an endangered species - at a site in eastern Ontario resulted in the site being acquired by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. David has also been conducting population monitoring of Spotted Turtles at another site in the Ottawa area since 1999, building on a previous researcher's 1980's work, and resulting in an impressive 30 year data set for this project. David's work has included tracking individual turtles using radio transmitters, which has demonstrated that some turtle populations may be relatively immune to the threat of traffic mortality if they remain within large wetlands. This result provides the scientific basis for putting a conservation priority on the identification and protection of such sites.

David also undertook a study to identify Blanding's Turtle habitat use during hibernation at a site in eastern Ontario, and the results of this study are published in *The Canadian Field-Naturalist* (2010). He also wrote a conservation assessment for Blanding's Turtle in 2002. Blanding's Turtles have been a hot topic in the ongoing fight against developing the South March Highlands in Kanata.

David tirelessly promotes turtle conservation through presentations to groups such as naturalists, conservation professionals and even water garden enthusiasts, covering topics such as Ontario's turtles, population trends of turtle species in the Ottawa area and how to make your water garden turtle-friendly. David has also provided training on turtles to conservation partners, written general articles for the public ("help a turtle cross the road"), and participated on the Ontario Multi-Species Turtles at Risk Recovery Team when it was active. David is currently the Ottawa area regional coordinator for the Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas.

The Club has truly benefitted from David's membership. He is not only active in the Conservation Committee but he and his family are active in the Macoun Field Club for young naturalists, helping to pass his conservation knowledge and ethic to the next generation.

For his many contributions to turtle conservation in the Ottawa area and more broadly, the OFNC is pleased to present David Seburn with the Conservation Award for a Member for 2012.

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