



The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

2012 Anne Hanes Natural History Award - Diane Lepage

OFNC home page
Coming events
Birding
Publications
Fletcher Wildlife Garden
Conservation
Awards
Macoun Club for young naturalists
FalconWatch
Committees and Board
Join the OFNC/make a donation
Links
Search
Contact us



Moths are considered by some to be the "poor sisters" of the more widely appreciated butterflies. Not so for Diane Lepage, who has made the study of moths her special passion. She is not only interested in the spectacular, brightly coloured types like the huge silk moths that are familiar to most naturalists, but the much smaller, mostly nocturnal species aptly named

"micromoths," of which there are hundreds. It requires special techniques to discover these creatures, involving ultraviolet lights, long nights in the woods or along roadsides, and ways of documenting what you find. For many entomologists, this means a killing jar and long hours spent spreading wings and writing labels. In Diane's case, the documentation is the non-lethal method of photography (in almost all cases). Several years ago, she gave a fully illustrated talk on moths to the Ottawa Entomology Club.

In the March 2013 issue of *Trail & Landscape*, Diane summarized five years of moth study at the Larose Forest, an ecological reserve 45 minutes east of Ottawa. In a lively and well-written article illustrated with her beautiful black-and-white photographs, she explains the importance of moths, something about their natural habitats and life histories, explains their taxonomy, and gives hints for observing them. This is followed by an astounding list of the 351 species she discovered, complete with scientific and vernacular names. This would make the Larose Forest one of the most intensely studied areas of eastern Canada for the moth fauna. Diane notes that every time she returns to the Forest, she encounters new species for her list, and so it is clear that many more species remain to be discovered.

Diane has not only looked at the moths of Larose Forest. Her observations have been made throughout the Ottawa Region and sometimes beyond. She has led well-attended OFNC evening excursions to share the experience of seeing night-flying insects with other Club

members. She is a frequent participant in BioBlitzes in the region, also adding to our knowledge of the moth fauna. Professional entomologists, such as Dr. Don Lafontaine at Agriculture Canada's insect collection, regard Diane as great source of information, and she is acknowledged by them as an expert on the moths of eastern Ontario and western Quebec. Her donations of interesting and significant moth specimens to the National Collection are highly valued and appreciated.

Not surprisingly, Diane is also interested in butterflies, and she is one of the leaders of the annual Butterfly Count. Her tireless work at the Fletcher Wildlife Garden's Butterfly Garden resulted in her being given the Member of the Year Award for 2008.

Diane's work is an excellent example of what a dedicated and knowledgeable amateur can achieve in making lasting scientific contributions. This is precisely the kind of individual that merits the Anne Hanes Natural History Award, and it is with great pleasure that we award it to Diane Lepage this year.

[Top of Page](#)

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