



The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Dr. Charles D. Bird, Honorary Member 2004

Honorary membership in the Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club is given to members or non-members in recognition of their many years of service to the Club or for their contributions to Canadian Natural History. Our newest honorary member, Dr. Charles D. Bird, is a retired cattle farmer from Erskine, Alberta, but qualifies for the honour on both counts. On the face of it, that might seem a little strange, but, as you will see, this is no ordinary cattle farmer.

Although his family roots were in the central Canadian prairies, Charley Bird was born in Oklahoma. He developed a love of the natural world at an early age, no doubt at least in part to his father, Ralph Durham Bird, an entomologist/naturalist who was teaching at the University of Oklahoma at the time, and his mother, Lois, who was a botanist. From the age of 10 through his college years, Charley followed his father's interests in insects. He later worked with the Northern Insect Survey and then in the field of Forest Entomology. At the University of Manitoba, he became fascinated with plant ecology and turned to the study of plants. Charley developed a strong interest in mosses at Oklahoma State University where he was doing graduate studies, taking courses from the bryologist, Dr. G. K. Ikenberry, eventually earning a master's degree and PhD. He returned to Canada in 1960 for a post-doctoral position at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, mainly studying mosses. Two years later, he accepted a position in the Biology Department at the University of Calgary, turning his attention to the bryophytes, lichens and vascular plants of Alberta and, indeed, all the Prairie Provinces.

At the university, Charley taught courses on all these subjects as well as biogeography, and he curated the growing herbarium as well. His research interests were principally in lichen and bryophyte ecology and taxonomy, and Charley published dozens of papers on mosses, lichens and flowering plants in scholarly journals such as *The Bryologist* and *Canadian Journal of Botany*, and our own *Canadian Field-Naturalist*. He also became involved in Alberta conservation issues and joined local natural history clubs such as the Calgary Field Naturalist's Society and Federation of Alberta Naturalists. In 1978, he received the Lauran Goulden Award for being the outstanding naturalist in Alberta that year. With a strong interest in the local flora and fauna, Charley published articles on a variety of subjects in the *Blue Jay*, the *Calgary Field Naturalist* and the *Alberta Naturalist*. He has, in fact, published close to 300 scholarly articles in all.

Although Charley decided to take early retirement in 1979, trading in his academic tweeds for Alberta denim to become a cattle farmer, he never set aside his love of the natural world, his commitment to conservation, or his interest in high quality scientific publication. He therefore has maintained a close association with his local Buffalo Lake Naturalists Society, and he stayed on as an Associate Editor of the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*, a job he began in 1974 and continues to this day, contributing over 30 years of service to the Ottawa Field-

- 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

Naturalists' Club. In the post-University years, Charley's interests returned to insects, especially butterflies and moths, and he became a major contributor to the beautiful and encyclopaedic book, *Alberta Butterflies*, published in 1995. At the present time, Charley is working on a catalogue of the micro-moths of southern Alberta. For his achievements in teaching and research, the Alberta Society of Professional Biologists presented him with the J. Dewey Soper Award in 2000, also making him an Honorary Life Member of that society.

Whether he is cataloguing mosses, studying the taxonomy of a lichen genus, working on the phenology of flowers, collecting, mounting and identifying hundreds of species of tiny moths, tracing his family's genealogy, or, I'm sure, keeping records of cattle breeding, Charley is always meticulous, thorough, imaginative and perceptive... a naturalist's naturalist. We are therefore proud to add Charley Bird to our roster of distinguished Honorary Members.

[Top of Page](#)

© The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

This page was revised on 23 May 2005

[Contact the OFNC](#)
