



The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Fenja Brodo - 2009 Honorary Member

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. It was Fenja who embraced technology and was the first editor of T&L to use a computer thanks to the coaching of Suzanne Blain.

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.

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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.

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