



The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Cliff Bennett, Conservation Award - Non-Member 2007

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In recognition of an outstanding contribution by a non-member (or group of non-members) in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley, with particular emphasis on activities within the Ottawa District.

Cliff Bennett is the recipient of this award for 2007, recognizing his contributions over many years to natural history conservation within the Ottawa Valley and in particular in the area of Almonte/Carleton Place. Cliff has demonstrated a sustained commitment to protection of the environment and has tirelessly worked over many decades to help people enjoy, understand and respect the natural world.

When you think of Cliff, such phrases as "founder of the Mississippi Valley Field

Naturalists, avid birder, local naturalist, nature advocate, community volunteer, artist, Lanark Era bird columnist and current Eastern Regional Director for Ontario Nature" come readily to mind.

Cliff is a founding member of the Mississippi Valley Field Naturalists (in 1988), where he has held various offices including President and Director for many years, and sits on key club committees. He is in large part responsible for the growth and influence of the club over the years, and has worked ceaselessly to ensure that MVFN activities increase the environmental awareness of citizens. For example, Cliff established the MVFN's warmly received Environmental Education Projects Program (EPPP) which helps fund class field trips, visiting speakers and presentations on environmental topics in area schools. He also encouraged the MVFN to take on an ambitious Climate Change Awareness Project. Cliff helped develop a very popular guide to canoe outings and trail hikes complete with descriptions; these guides are posted on the MVFN website.

An avid birder, Cliff writes an excellent and very popular column, 'Speaking of Birds' for the Lanark Era newspaper, something he has done for many years. He coordinates the Carleton Place Christmas Bird Count; participates in the Baillie Birdathon to raise funds for bird research and conservation, and was instrumental in organizing participants for the MVFN's Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas square which they surveyed thoroughly over the five years of the project (2001-2005). By writing about the atlas project in his birding column and distributing

flyers to rural landowners telling them of the project and asking them to report bird sightings to him, a a lot of breeding bird records were generated.

As a nature conservation advocate, Cliff has been influential on the Board of Directors of Ontario Nature, representing Eastern Ontario groups since 2005. He has been extremely busy and effective in this capacity and local naturalist groups have already benefited from having such an articulate, informed and persuasive representative to the provincial conservation body. He also provided thoughtful environmental input into the new Community Official Plan for Mississippi Mills, helped to start up the Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust Conservancy to protect valuable natural areas in the region, participated on the Environmental Advisory Committee for the Lanark Highlands, effectively advocated for public trails in Lanark County and was instrumental in establishing the North Lanark Trails Advisory Committee.

Cliff's active involvement in and commitment to natural history and conservation issues is long-standing, and shows no signs of waning! We are really fortunate to have such a dedicated and effective spokesperson for the conservation of our natural world.

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