

2020 Honorary Membership: Fred Schueler and Aleta Karstad

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.

Fred Schueler and his wife, Aleta Karstad, are well known to naturalists and nature lovers in the Ottawa Region. They have been a team for over 47 years, documenting events and changes in the natural world here in the Valley and throughout Canada. Not only have they made

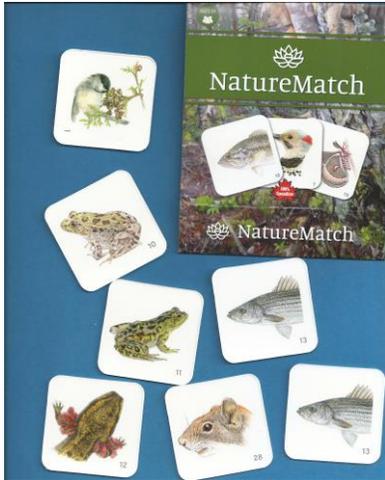


Mudpuppy. Photo by Annie Bélair

observations, collected data and specimens and made drawings and paintings all across the country, but in 2009, thirty years after their first survey trips, they returned to many of these areas to re-access the natural history, their “Thirty Years Later Expedition.”

Fred became a member of the OFNC in 1971, soon after coming to Ottawa to work at the Canadian Museum of Nature. Although Fred’s interests were primarily focused on reptiles and amphibians (his Ph.D. thesis was on the Leopard Frog), he became expert in many other fields of natural history including malacology and botany. Being a talented and dedicated observer, Fred created a working database of observations on everything from road-kills to invasive plants and animals such as giant reedgrass and zebra mussels. Much of Fred’s work has been done on contract with the Canadian Museum of Nature where he is the Museum’s longest serving Research Associate. His research and other carefully documented observations have resulted in 32 publications, books and reports.

Aleta Karstad is acknowledged as one of Canada’s most talented wildlife artists. Her works of art adorn many homes and public spaces and have illustrated her popular books, including *Canadian Nature Notebook*, *Wild Season’s Daybook* and *A Place to Walk* as well as, more recently, a memory card game, *NatureMatch*. She has received several awards for her art and conservation work, including the Environmental Scientist of the Year (2010) from the Canadian Geographic Society and Robert Bateman Award (2018) from the Canadian Wildlife Federation.



NatureMatch, the memory card game Aleta created and illustrated.

Their conservation work has been far-reaching and influential, from Cumshewa Head on Haida Gwaii and the rivers crossed by the Energy East Pipeline from Alberta to New Brunswick, to northeastern Ontario and the Dumoine River in Quebec. They've also worked with citizen groups protesting habitat destruction throughout eastern Ontario, discovered or predicted most of the new Species-at-Risk mussel populations in eastern Ontario, and have worked with official bodies on the conservation of Kemptville Creek, the Limerick Forest, and New Brunswick's Protected Natural Areas. Especially notable is their on-going collaboration with the South Nation Conservation

Authority's Fish and Wildlife Committee with regard to the South Nation River.

Fred and Aleta's conservation work was acknowledged in 2018 by their receiving the Glen Davis Conservation Leadership Prize from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the World Wildlife Fund-Canada. Aleta and Fred, with their typical generosity and selflessness, plan to use the \$10,000 in prize money to upgrade their database and make it more accessible to the public and other researchers.

Mention must be made of Aleta and Fred's tireless efforts in nature education for which they received the 2011 OFNC Mary Stuart Education Award. Fred's "Mudpuppy Night" in Bishop's Mills has been a popular annual event for decades. They've also published popular natural history books and run the NatureList & OREGlist, e-mail list-serves for natural history and road ecology. In addition, Fred is a regular contributor to several FaceBook groups, answering questions pertaining to nature, and he has written several articles for *Trail & Landscape*. Fred and Aleta were instrumental in the creation of the Eastern Ontario Biodiversity Museum in Kemptville, in part, to save the threatened collections at Carleton University. Although that project couldn't be sustained, they are presently operating the Bishop Mill's Natural History Centre to house their personal natural history collection of 4-5 million specimens.

In recognition of these impressive accomplishments over many years, the OFNC is proud to welcome Aleta Karstad and Frederick W. Schueler as Honorary Members.

Prepared by Irwin M. Brodo, acknowledging an article by Paulina Hrebacka from InsideOttawaValley.com, the CPAWS citation for the Glen Davis Award and a biographic sketch of Aleta Karstad by Nature Artists website, http://www.natureartists.com/artists/artist_biography.asp?ArtistID=40, accessed 25 Dec. 2020.