

## 2021 Anne Hanes Natural History Award: Owen Clarkin

*The Anne Hanes Natural History Award recognizes outstanding contributions of an amateur naturalist to our understanding and knowledge of the natural history of the Ottawa Valley.*

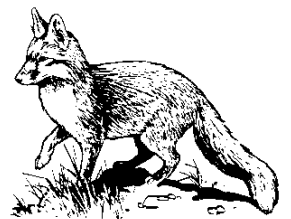


The Red Spruce is a distinctive tree, native to eastern North America. In the Ottawa district, recent records were few, and those that were known were found primarily in small plantations or single trees in scattered locations east of the city of Ottawa. However, Red Spruce was apparently more common in Ontario in the past, but was largely logged out, according to research by Owen Clarkin.

From his knowledge of the species and its habitat requirements, Owen was convinced there were more Red Spruce populations than previously recorded in the district. Having driven past likely looking forests, he decided to conduct a detailed search of potential sites, using Google Streetview to do a preliminary check of roadsides in selected locations prior to checking them in the field. In addition, he spent countless hours driving through other areas searching for the species.

From 2019 through 2020 and 2021, Owen conducted a number of surveys in locations such as Garlandside Road and Lavigne Natural Park, both north of Limoges; the Plantagenet area, Rockland, a section of forest near Anderson Road and Highway 417, areas he calls “the Ottawa-Hawkesbury Red Spruce “belt”, i.e. acidic clay on sandy substrate.” During 2021 he also conducted Red Spruce surveys in Lennox and Addington County.

Many new populations of Red Spruce were found and recorded, both single trees and stands of 3 or more. Numerous photos were taken, and all records added to iNaturalist. Owen has added 1000 observations of Red Spruce to iNaturalist



These records are complemented by Trees Canadensis, a website where he shares identification features, illustrative photos and distribution maps, not only for Red Spruce, but also for twelve other native trees. Owen and Janet Mason began the website in 2016 to record and disseminate their experiences with and appreciation for native trees of eastern Ontario and western Quebec. The website also includes accounts of Owen's search for extant populations of Red Spruce and, just last year, the spread of Eastern Elm Sawfly westward from Quebec into eastern Ontario.

While Owen is a chemist by vocation, he has been an avid naturalist since his youth. Through his efforts, Owen Clarkin has added to our knowledge of the distribution of Red Spruce in the area, previously poorly documented. These activities and accomplishments make Owen a very fitting recipient of the Anne Hanes Natural History Award.

