

## 2024 Mary Stuart Education Award - Janette Niwa

*The Mary Stuart Education Award is given in recognition of outstanding achievements in the field of natural history education in the Ottawa Region.*



Birds face innumerable challenges in our world, particularly in urban areas where tall buildings and residential homes, often with large windows, create a deadly hazard. This deeply concerns Janette Niwa who has long been creating awareness of the issue through education.

She is an active member of Safe Wings Ottawa (SWO) which she represents on the OFNC Board. Believing that education is the best way to spread the word, she participates in many events to publicize the perils birds face when navigating our cities. In 2024 alone, she attended nine events including the Carp Fair and the Sandy Hill Eco-Fair, where she provided invaluable information on how we can provide safe passage for our feathered friends. During the first week of May, Janette leads a guided “Jane’s Walk” of downtown Ottawa to talk about bird friendly buildings, the history of Safe Wings and how we could make homes and commercial buildings around Ottawa more bird friendly.

Recently, she updated and enhanced Safe Wings Ottawa’s display by creating infographics of some of the victims of window collisions. These contain detailed information about songbird migration, their habitats, etc. She also brings the SWO display to the annual OFNC Awards Night.



During her regular patrols in search of birds that have collided with buildings, she frequently takes along new volunteers, providing excellent hands-on training in how to find and rescue those birds.

Her role with Safe Wings Ottawa is manifold: she provides regular updates on SWO activities to volunteers; she is events coordinator for the group and she helps maintain their database.

Janette's concern for, and knowledge of, birds makes her an excellent spokesperson, not only for SWO, but for the OFNC. In April 2024 she appeared on a CTV news segment about birds, discussing birding hotspots and how to get started in birding. She emphasised the OFNC's "Birding Code of Conduct" along with how to keep birds safe from window collisions. As an articulate and passionate birder, she did a superb job.

Janette was also SWO's media contact for other news stories in 2024, involving several by Carleton University journalism students (such as the window collision death of the rare Western Tanager visitor). Additionally, she provided a pre-recorded video to The Wildlife Society's annual conference in Baltimore, USA, and participated online in the panel discussion that followed its presentation, on how birds perceive windows and how modifications could alleviate collisions. As well, she discussed strategies for building better partnerships, and how society could change its behaviour regarding bird protection, particularly in urban areas.



As if all of that is not enough, Janette has also been a great supporter of Bird Friendly Ottawa, an initiative of Nature Canada. She posts news and events from partner groups (OFNC, Ottawa Valley Wild Bird Care Centre, Wild Birds Unlimited, and Safe Wings Ottawa) on their Facebook page, as well as events and tips from groups such as Dark Sky International and the Ottawa Wildflower Seed Library.

For her wide-ranging work on bird conservation and educating communities through many and varied means, the OFNC is very proud to present the Mary Stewart Education Award to Janette Niwa.

*Prepared by Christine Hanrahan and Deborah Doherty*