



Ottawa Field Naturalists' Club
Club des naturalistes d'Ottawa

2025

CONSERVATION AWARD, MEMBERS: DIANE LEPAGE AND PETER BUTLER

This award is given in recognition of an outstanding contribution by a member (or group of members) in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley.

We are pleased to award Diane Lepage and Peter Butler for their comprehensive inventory of moths at the MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre, which is in Cumberland just east of Ottawa.

From mid-May to mid-October of 2025, on 11 different nights, moths and other insects were attracted to glowing sheets hung from lines across various trails in the 77-acre forest at MacSkimming Centre. Diane and Peter set up their lights and sheets before dusk and waited for darkness (Christine Hanrahan accompanied Diane on two nights when Peter was away). Over the next 4-7 hours, they photographed the insects that rested on the sheets.

Peter built a spreadsheet to organize, sort and filter the data arising from their moth identifications. Diane, Peter and Christine referred to field guides, several websites and local entomologists to identify the moths in their own photos. Peter's spreadsheet enabled them to consolidate their conclusions, recognize photos of unidentified taxa, and seek advice. So far, they have identified 457 different moth species. More remain to be identified.

Their observations and identifications have been posted to iNaturalist, in the MacSkimming Centre's Biodiversity Project. This project was originally created by Michael Leveille in 2017 and now has a species count of 1846 across all taxa. Over half of them are insects, and almost half of the insect taxa in the project were only added to the project in 2025 as a result of the moth inventory. The MacSkimming Centre uses its iNaturalist project with attending students, in particular Grade 6 classes, that come for the Biodiversity program.

In the past few years, Peter ran multiple surveys to sample moths at Petrie Island. Diane has organized mothing nights at many locations in the region for several years, including a moth workshop at the MacSkimming Centre in 2016 for Nature Canada's NatureBlitz event. These surveys add significantly to our awareness of insect diversity in the Ottawa region. The fabulous diversity of moths at the MacSkimming Outdoor Education Centre is an inspiration to consider detailed full-season inventories on other insect groups.

Prepared by Lynn Ovenden

