

Leading the way

More Canadians than ever are getting involved to help conserve our wildlife. We salute this year's deserving recipients of CWF's annual conservation awards

TODAY, A GROWING NUMBER OF people are standing up for nature. Canadians in record numbers are coming out to pull invasives from rights-of-way, clear clogged and littered waterways, ferry tiny frogs across lethal expanses of roadway, join native planting events to support pollinators, as well as countless other local initiatives. And using the handheld computers we call smartphones, "citizen scientists" are contributing high-quality data about wildlife species numbers and distribution, deepening the perspective on local and global biodiversity. Renowned primatologist Jane Goodall once said, "We have the choice to use the gift of our life to make the world a better place — or not bother." People are bothering, more than ever.

The nine people honoured by CWF who are featured here (and the groups and organizations they are part of) are a snapshot of the growing efforts across the country: teachers and students; blue collar, white collar and retired; young and old, from varied backgrounds. They represent tens of thousands more like them across the country who are getting involved. As we see in the thoughtful remarks and observations from each award recipient, there are as many reasons to volunteer as there are volunteers.

It is not surprising Canadians feel connected to nature: this country has extraordinary natural abundance — vast unspoiled areas populated by countless species in varied ecosystems of astonishing diversity. It is our good fortune to live here.



Natalie McIntosh, this year's recipient of the Wade Luzny Youth Conservation Award

NATALIE ROSE

CWF Awards

For 400 years, the people who arrived late to this rich land took advantage of the bounty but spent little time thinking about preserving or conserving it. That started to change a little more than a century ago about the time the first national parks were established.

By the 1960s, heightened awareness of the effects of pollution was sparking more change. In 1962, Rachel Carson's ground-breaking bestseller, *Silent Spring*, publicized the disastrous effects of DDT on the environment and wildlife. The same year, the Canadian Wildlife Federation was founded, devoted to "teaching others to appreciate the natural world in order to ensure a lasting legacy of healthy wildlife and habitat."

Engaged citizens have a multiplying effect: their enthusiasm is catching and the actions of one volunteer inspire another who in turn inspires another. Awareness raised, their numbers grow...

The first-ever Earth Day was in 1970 (spurred by a massive oil spill on the California coastline a year earlier). The Canadian public was becoming increasingly concerned about pollution, indiscriminate release of toxic chemicals, the loss of wilderness, depletion of natural resources, urban sprawl and freeway construction. Acid rain was a grave concern, and the nearly dead state of Lake Erie was a national embarrassment. Grassroots environmental movements started to gain popularity as people sought to be part of the solution.

In 1971, Canada became the second country in the world to establish a formal Department of the Environment, and in 1973 the *Canada Wildlife Act* was passed. Concerned about increasing numbers of endangered species, Canadians lobbied hard for a registry. The result in 1977 was the creation of the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. That committee continues to provide independent reports on wildlife species in Canada at risk of extinction. It has never been busier.

Awareness — and urgency — have only increased since then, driven by a growing understanding of the threat to us all of

carbon-driven global heating. The concern is magnified by a better and more scientific grasp of just how important nature is to our health and well-being today ... and to those who come after.

GETTING INVOLVED

The American actor and comedian Lily Tomlin once quipped, "I always wondered why somebody doesn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody."

Getting involved in an environmental cause of any kind is the most effective way most of us can contribute. Not only does the important work on the ground get done by you and others like you, but these grassroots efforts drive environmental progress.

According to a recent study published in the journal *Biological Conservation*, while advanced scientific research and analysis is crucial to understanding environmental challenges, and detailed policy-making is essential to planning and acting to address them, all that is not enough. The study's authors are adamant: solving complex problems like species extinction and water pollution requires persistent action by groups of engaged citizens. Why? Because there's a multiplying effect. The enthusiasm is catching: the actions of one volunteer inspire another who brings another. Conversations with family and friends bring more out. Awareness is raised. A community coalesces around an important homegrown cause. Local businesses lend their support. The numbers grow. The benefits grow too: the stream runs clear with fish again, the hydro line right-of-way is now a pollinator corridor, and the turtles crossed the road safely again this year. In their individual efforts to conserve and protect local wildlife, Canadians are doing important work for the global future.



Past Presidents' Canadian Legislator Award

This award, established in 1988, is presented annually to a provincial, territorial or federal elected legislator in recognition of a significant contribution toward the conservation of wildlife in Canada.

Mike Morris

PRINCE GEORGE, BRITISH COLUMBIA
Member, three terms, B.C. Legislative Assembly,
Prince George-Mackenzie

WHAT THE NOMINATORS SAID

Mike Morris stands out as a champion for science-based conservation and the sustainable stewardship of British Columbia's natural resources. He is widely respected as a conscience for land-use management in B.C. and a voice for wildlife and the people who care about them.

He's a passionate hands-on advocate for the environment and a voice for wildlife. He's been a thoughtful critic of the policies that have guided forest management by all provincial governments (including his own) for nearly eight decades.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Trying to change a century-old paradigm that sees the only value of a forest in the trees being converted into two-by-fours has been a daunting task. A mentor of mine once said that you can "move a mountain with a teaspoon." I think I've been able to graduate to a shovel. I remain optimistic the efforts of many like-minded folks can keep B.C.'s unique biodiversity from ecological collapse.

As a young child living in various small remote B.C. communities, I found solace in the outdoors as a way to escape trauma and domestic violence. By the time I began my career as an RCMP member, the outdoors had become a lifestyle. I served many years in remote communities and enjoyed the wild harvest opportunities and all the peace and quiet B.C.'s wilderness had to offer.



Doug Clarke Memorial Award for Outstanding Affiliate Conservation Project
This award is presented to a Canadian Wildlife Federation affiliate, its clubs or its members for the most outstanding conservation project of the previous year. It honours the memory of a former CWF director, C.H.D. Clarke, who devoted his career to wildlife management.

Advancing Women in Conservation Summit

SASKATOON, NOVEMBER 2022
Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation

DANE ROY

Courtney Devins, director of Communications and Marketing at the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, was project leader for the summit

WHAT THEY SAID

At this weekend-long summit for women in the conservation workforce from across Canada and diverse work environments (from various levels of government to NGOs, educational institutions and industry), women came together to develop solutions to the barriers, challenges and discrimination they face in the conservation field

Women often go unrepresented at a leadership level when it comes to the management of our natural resources. Despite enjoying the outdoors as hunters, anglers and trappers, women are often a minority in most rooms where conservation decisions are being made.

The goal of the summit was to highlight women's unique challenges and contributions to conservation action planning, provide opportunities for skill building and create a space where women working and volunteering in the conservation and environmental sectors could build networks of support.

This summit engaged 98 women from six provinces. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, particularly about the opportunities to connect with other women in the sector and build their skills and connections.

CHELSEY ELLIS

The next Advancing Women in Conservation Summit is being planned for October 2023 in Moncton, New Brunswick.



Stan Hodgkiss Canadian Outdoorsperson of the Year
Since 1975, this award has been presented to an outstanding individual in the field of conservation in Canada. It is named in honour of CWF's founding president.

Mark S. Boyce

SHERWOOD PARK, ALBERTA
Professor of ecology, Department of Biological Science, University of Alberta

WHAT THE NOMINATORS SAID

Dedicated to conservation for more than 50 years, and a professor of ecology at the University of Alberta since 1999, Mark Boyce has had a highly productive research career; he was ranked among the most influential wildlife ecologists in North America by the *Stanford Review*. He has trained some of the leading wildlife ecologists globally.

Among his extensive and far-reaching conservation research, recent work includes research on grassland carbon storage, working with more than 60 ranches across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in adopting and assessing alternative livestock grazing systems. He also recently led the Montane Elk Project to study the effects of access management on elk and grizzly bears in Alberta.

An avid hunter and outdoorsperson, Boyce is a member of the Alberta Game Policy Advisory Council and serves on the Endangered Species Conservation Committee.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

I grew up on a farm, and every spare minute was spent hunting, fishing and trapping. I am passionate about conservation because of my love of the outdoors and wanting to ensure the persistence of wildlife and habitats. No lifestyle is more rewarding than a career in wildlife conservation. I spend much of my time outdoors doing things that make me very happy. Contributing to conservation gives meaning to life.

CWF Awards



Wade Luzny Youth Conservation Award

This award was rededicated to honour CWF's much-admired executive director who died unexpectedly in 2016. It recognizes Canadian youth who have undertaken wildlife or habitat conservation projects and activities that have helped make a difference to the environment.

Natalie McIntosh

LONDON, ONTARIO

Founder, Nautical Waters

WHAT THE NOMINATORS SAID

Nautical Waters receives donations of abandoned fishing equipment from numerous partners on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Profits from the sale of creative products on Etsy made from the old gear is donated back to the causes.

Now 17, Natalie McIntosh demonstrates the incredible difference one person of any age can make to conservation of wildlife and habitat.

McIntosh is deeply dedicated to encouraging everyone to connect and get involved. What started out as a school project has transformed into an amazing and innovative program.

IN HER OWN WORDS

As a child, my bedroom was decorated with stuffed dolphins and turtle posters, and the shelves were full of marine life picture books. I would daydream about swimming with Dory and Marlin on their way to find Nemo. When I heard about ghost gear, I knew I had to make a difference.

The most important thing I would tell people is not to be afraid to ask for help — you don't need to know it all! Surround yourself with people who have skills you don't have.

When Nautical Waters started, I thought people would see me as a kid and not take me seriously. I was wrong. Many people were more than happy to do what they could to help me grow Nautical Waters.



Roland Michener Conservation Award

Established in 1978 by the Canadian Wildlife Federation, this award is a tribute to the former governor general of Canada, an outstanding outdoorsperson and past honorary president of the Federation. It is awarded to any individual who has demonstrated a commitment to conservation through effective and responsible activities that promote, enhance and further the conservation of Canada's natural resources.

Alexandra Morton

NORTH VANCOUVER ISLAND

Researcher and activist;
Founder, Salmon Coast Field Station

WHAT THE NOMINATORS SAID

Alexandra Morton is a field biologist and activist who has done groundbreaking research on the damaging impact of ocean-based salmon farming on the coast of B.C. She is at the heart of the long fight to protect the wild salmon that are the province's keystone species.

Morton became concerned about the impact of fish farms in her local ecosystem and began inviting her graduate students to her home to gather information and raise awareness. That evolved into the field station. Officially established in 2006 to provide a base for long-term, community-focused, independent research, the team has grown to include academics and conservationists from around the world.

IN HER OWN WORDS

We all see things that must change, and when you begin to work to making that change, your entire internal chemistry responds. The step from victim to activist in whatever form is as good for you as it is for this world.

I thank Chief Robert Chamberlin, chair of the First Nation Wild Salmon Alliance, for being one of the first to respond to what I was reporting. Over the past 20 years, he has never stopped working to protect wild salmon from salmon farms.



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Kimberly Titchener

EDMONTON
President and founder, Bear Safety & More Inc.

ZOYA LYNCH

WHAT THE NOMINATORS SAID

Kim Titchener gives wildlife a voice. Passionate about conservation, she is dedicated to educating people about the importance of wildlife safety so that we can co-exist. I do not believe there is anyone more deserving of the CWF award for conservation in action.

Titchener has dedicated nearly 20 years to developing and delivering safety and awareness programs, including protecting Bow Valley wildlife through WildSmart, and engaging communities in reducing negative human-wildlife interactions.

In all, Titchener has facilitated wildlife safety training programs to more than 70,000 people and developed policies and protocols for the oil and gas, forestry, construction and railway sectors.

IN HER OWN WORDS

In my early 20s, working with the local bear population in Banff National Park, I saw first-hand the devastating impact humans have on wildlife. I realized there is a lack of understanding of how to behave in nature. I wanted to help provide the public with grassroots programming so we can all coexist.

I thank Grizzly Bear #66 and her family for showing grace to humans. The many hours I spent monitoring her and her cubs has gifted me with an incredible amount of love and respect for her species. And I thank the whole community of Canmore and our many volunteers.

DAN ABRAMOVICI



Robert Bateman Award

Presented to those who bring awareness to conservation through an artistic means, be it painting, sculpture, photography, writing, song or dance, this award was created on the occasion of CWF's 50th anniversary and is named in celebration of Canada's admired and treasured naturalist and painter.

Nadine Pequeneza

TORONTO

Director, documentary film *Last of the Right Whales*

WHAT THE NOMINATORS SAID

Breathtaking photography of the elusive right whale tells the story of this critically endangered species through the eyes of scientists, photographers, fish harvesters, rescuers, volunteers and whale spotters. The documentary *Last of the Right Whales* engages people in how to help protect the few remaining individuals and their habitat and do the work to bring right whales back from the brink of extinction.

Awarded Best Canadian Feature at the Planet in Focus film festival in October 2021, the film had a successful launch in cinemas in February 2022. A broadcast version of the film aired on CBC Television's *The Nature of Things* and is streaming on CBC Gem.

IN HER OWN WORDS

Working on *Last of the Right Whales* during the pandemic reminded me that we are a species of problem-solvers. We can rewrite the ending to the story.

The best part about making documentaries is meeting people who are passionate enough to share their stories; they are always inspiring to me, and I am honoured to be able to amplify their voices. That shout-out extends to the film's impact partners — Canadian Wildlife Federation, International Fund for Animal Welfare, Canadian Whale Institute, Sierra Club Canada Foundation, Oceans North and the Pew Charitable Trusts. Without these organizations, the film never would have had the impact it has had.

CWF Awards

Youth Mentor Award

This award honours an individual or group that has made a significant contribution to creating or presenting programs that introduce Canadian youth to the importance of conservation, habitat and wildlife.

École secondaire Jean- Gauthier

ALMA, QUEBEC

WHAT THE NOMINATORS SAID

Over 16 years, EJG's Wildlife Resources Program has been helping kids discover the joys of nature and the many ways to experience it.

Begun as a way of lowering rising dropout rates in an economically depressed area, the wildlife program has offered more than 1,700 young people fun and inspiring out-of-classroom learning that enhances academic performance when back inside.

Field trips, led by educators who are passionate about the environment, explore an array of subjects: among them ornithology, entomology, mycology, botany, habitat enhancement, resource management, survival skills, as well as fishing, hunting and nature observation.

Wildlife benefit too: program participants over the years have helped save countless ducks, bluebirds, swallows, and bats. They have erected more than a thousand nesting boxes and roosts.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Jean Gaudreault, science teacher, coordinator of the Wildlife Resources Program: The Covid19 pandemic has made me so much more aware that we all need to be in nature. The benefits are physical and psychological. It is how we can restore balance to our lives. Our program's message is: Follow your calling. Don't be discouraged by obstacles, just take your path one step at a time. Every positive action is another step forward. What is important is the journey, not the end.



Jean Gaudreault, science teacher, coordinator of the Wildlife Resources Program

PRANAVANA / MARIEVE LAPERRÈ

JESSICA DEERKS



WILD Educator Award

First awarded in 2016, this honour salutes exceptional instructors using CWF's education programs to provide youth with innovative and meaningful experiences that focus on wildlife and building a conservation ethic.

Patricia Fraser

PEMBROKE, ONTARIO

Renfrew County District School Board

WHAT THE NOMINATORS SAID

A numeracy coach for the Renfrew County District School Board in Eastern Ontario, Patricia Fraser helped initiate a board-wide project to train educators in CWF's Project Wild and Below Zero professional development programs.

While the success is shared by all the teachers, coaches and administrators involved, Fraser is a shining example of the Dalai Lama's maxim that just as ripples spread out when a single pebble is dropped into water, the actions of individuals can have far-reaching effects.

This training has been the best professional learning experience in my teaching career. I know I can take this resource to support my students and connect to the curriculum.

IN HER OWN WORDS

I was a town kid. My first real wilderness experience was when I went camping with my [eventual] husband. He worked for an outdoor leadership program. It was during my time with him there, helping gear up students for long trips and receiving them back after, that I could see the transformation.

I have found that educators are too often trapped by the four walls of the classroom. We learn to never let the physical structure you are in determine the limits of your curiosity.

A shout out to the Renfrew County District School Board team I worked with — Shelley Gagne, Jane Good and Jenn Wroe — and of course my husband, Jeff.