

2016 – Dr. Vicki L. Friesen

For the past 25 years, Dr. Vicki Friesen's research group at Queen's University has conducted ground-breaking work on the mechanisms of population differentiation in birds, especially seabirds. Of particular importance has been her work on the mechanisms of population differentiation and speciation, conservation genetics and molecular evolution. Her reviews and meta-analyses of the field have been widely cited and generated entire sub-disciplines based on key patterns and new hypotheses developed by Vicki and her group. For instance, a recent review pointed out that several factors other than physical barriers to dispersal (the main form of allopatric speciation in land birds) disrupt gene flow in seabirds. Vicki's work on the systematics of seabirds has not only contributed to delineating cryptic species and distinct populations for conservation, but has provided the comprehensive phylogenetic background essential for complete studies of ecology, behaviour and evolution in those groups. More recently, Vicky has adopted a whole-genome approach to examine physiological adaptation and molecular evolution.



Photo of northern gannets courtesy of Dave Fifield.

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Vicki is a world-class ornithologist with a conscience. Not only is she one of the world's pre-eminent avian geneticists, having published over 100 papers, but much of her research is focused on clear conservation questions. For instance, Vicki's research on *Xanthus's* Murrelets led to the splitting of the species into the Scripps's and Guadalupe Murrelets, which has generated additional protection for both species. Her

work on the avifauna of Haida Gwaii was partially directed towards using genetic data to address the conservation significance of the unique bird subspecies that live there. In addition to her academic work on Conservation Biology, Vicki has undertaken many reviews and reports relating to conservation concerns and was, for several years, a leading source of genetics expertise for the birds sub-committee of COSEWIC – the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Vicki provided expert advice, and input freely and incisively about conservation issues.

While Vicki's more recent programs have focused on genetics, she is also an accomplished ecologist and physiologist. For instance, Vicki was the first person to directly document the existence of a region of prey depletion around seabird colonies, as postulated by Ashmole, a region she memorably coined as "Ashmole's halo". Vicki's work on activity-specific metabolic rates in gannets provided some of the first data on the cost of flight at sea. Her wealth of knowledge in multiple fields has propelled many of Vicki's accomplishments in ornithology. And, along the way, Vicki has been a superb mentor, conducting rigorous and well-informed science while fostering collaborations and inspiring others including her many graduate students and post-docs.

To conclude, Vicki Friesen is a compassionate, rigorous, and productive member of the Canadian ornithological community whose influence extends beyond Canada's borders and whose research informs an array of disciplines ranging from evolutionary biology, molecular ecology, and conservation research and policy. For her long-lasting commitment to conservation, and contributions to the understanding of ecology and evolution of birds, the Society of Canadian Ornithologists is delighted to present the 2016 Doris Speirs award to Vicki Friesen.

French translators needed for *Picoïdes*

SCO-SOC is seeking volunteers to translate newsletter content from English to French and French to English for future issues as part of an effort to make *Picoïdes* a truly bilingual newsletter. Interested volunteers are asked to please contact Ken Otter (Ken.Otter@unbc.ca) or Colleen Barber (Colleen.Barber@smu.ca) for more details.