

2012 Jamie Smith Memorial Award for Mentoring: Laurene Ratcliffe

The Jamie Smith Memorial Award for Mentoring is one of the top honours bestowed by SCO-SOC. It is awarded to individuals who are committed to the training and development of the next generation of Canadian ornithologists. I am pleased to announce that this year's award was presented to Laurene Ratcliffe.

Dr. Ratcliffe's scientific record as an exceptional Canadian ornithologist speaks for itself; however, the 19 letters that we received in support of her nomination for this award speak volumes about her unique skill as a mentor. The letters we received were from students that she mentored as undergraduates, graduates, and post-doctorate fellows. Many of these students have gone on to highly successful careers in the field of ornithology. In addition, several letters were from people who had chosen other career paths, and many spoke of Dr. Ratcliffe's practice of encouraging students to evaluate what they wanted for their career and to help them do whatever was necessary to accomplish that.

Dr. Ratcliffe has a positive approach to students, encouraging them to think critically, and provides thoughtful constructive feedback on their work. She is known for her relatively small, but highly productive lab where the student to supervisor ratio allows her to give significant time to each student. She has confidence and trust in her students which gives them the freedom to develop and explore the

questions that truly interest them. One of her key gifts is eagerly encouraging scientific imagination while demanding remarkable rigour.

What is most impressive about Dr. Ratcliffe is the lasting influence she has had on her students. Her students not only credit her as an outstanding scientific mentor – but they speak of the influence she has had on them as mentors themselves. Dr. Ratcliffe truly embodies the spirit of the Jamie Smith Mentoring Award in Ornithology, both as a mentor and in her ability to inspire the next generation of mentors.

On behalf of the award committee, I would like to congratulate Laurene on her achievements and encourage others to consider nominating their mentor for next year's award.

Laurene Ratcliffe and her mentees (Photo by Andrea Pomeroy)

