

2018 Jamie Smith Memorial Award Recipient – Nicky Koper

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 the unanimous selection for the 2018 Jamie Smith Mentoring Award was Nicola Koper. There were three nominees in 2018, and all were deserving of selection. However, Dr. Koper stood out among those three. Dr. Koper is a Professor in the Natural Resource Institute (NRI) at the University of Manitoba where she has supervised many undergraduate, Masters, Ph.D. and postdoctoral mentees. She completed a B.Sc. and M.Sc. at University of Guelph, a Ph.D. at University of Alberta and a postdoc at the NRI. She was the first woman in her Faculty to be promoted to full professor. The award was presented by Ken Otter at Canada Evening at the International Ornithological Congress in Vancouver, alongside the Public Awareness Award from Partners In Flight (who had independently also selected Nicola Koper for their own award).

Dr. Koper is especially deserving of this award because she shares so many of the values and passions held by Jamie Smith: a sincere love for scientific discovery, especially for the purpose of conservation, and a passion for the natural world and birds. Like Jamie, Nicola has



had an immense scientific impact on avian ecology, both in Canada and worldwide, through her impressive publication record, her conservation achievements, and her record in training new generations of ornithologists. Dr. Koper has mentored students in mixed-grass and tall-grass prairies in Alberta and Manitoba, as well as in Grenada, West Indies. She has published 67 articles, which have been cited over 1,300 times, as well as having co-written a book on birdwatching in the Prairies. Her ability to publish many insightful papers has been passed along to her students and mentees, with whom she has published more than two-thirds of her papers.

Based on the nomination letters, her approach to mentorship intends to take students beyond her classroom and give them tools to succeed in their chosen careers. The committee also appreciated her dedication to continue to support her former students once they have moved on. For

example, one of the supporting letters indicated that they implemented Dr. Koper's coaching methods in their own approach to mentoring. To the committee, that was an indicator of a great mentor. We believe that Nicky's legacy of dedication to her students, and her emphasis on translating science to sound conservation policy, is exactly the spirit that was embodied by Jamie Smith, and we are therefore very happy to award the 2018 Jamie Smith Mentoring Award to her.

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

Kyle Elliot, Jamie Smith Memorial Award Committee Chair