

2019 Jamie Smith Memorial Award Recipient – Scott Forbes

The Jamie Smith Memorial Award for Mentoring is one of the top honours of the Society and recognizes individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the fledging of new generations of Canadian ornithologists. Nominees are ranked based on their commitment to fostering achievement among their students and peers and demonstrating the importance of mentoring in their professional life. On behalf of the Jamie Smith Committee, who also consisted of Andrea MacLeod and Oliver Love, I am pleased to announce that this year's award is being presented to Scott Forbes. The following summary has been written by Leanne Grieves, a former student of Dr. Forbes, and we are grateful for her summary of some of Dr. Forbes' lengthy career.

-Kyle Elliott, Chair of Jamie Smith Committee

Scott is highly deserving of the Jamie Smith Memorial Award for Mentoring in Ornithology. Scott is an outstanding avian researcher who has made important ornithological contributions to the behavioural ecology of families. He has published extensive work on breeding biology, competition and reproduction in Great Blue Herons, Osprey, Bald Eagles, Eared Grebes and Western Grebes and on avian brood



Dorothy Hill presented the award to Scott Forbes. //
Dorothy Hill a remis le prix à Scott Forbes.
Photo: Colleen Barber.

reduction, primarily through his long-term work on Red-winged Blackbirds. He has published 82 peer-reviewed book chapters and research articles in top journals such as *Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology*, *Ecology*, *Nature*, *American Naturalist*, and *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* as well as book chapters. He also authored *A Natural History of Families* (Princeton University Press), which received the Choice Award as one of the Outstanding Academic Titles of 2005. Scott is not only a great ornithologist, but he has received several distinctions for his general efforts in education and outreach. In 2005, he received a First Annual Alumnus Speaker Award from Simon Fraser University and an Erica and Arnold Rogers Research Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship from the University of Winnipeg for his contributions to public outreach and education on science and policy, frequently through popular media. Scott has written dozens of articles for The Winnipeg Free Press and has also published in New York Times, Boston Globe, Washington Post, Manchester Guardian, London Times, and National Post.

Since establishing his research lab at the University of Winnipeg nearly 30 years ago, many of Scott's publications have been co-authored with students. Scott has supervised 31 undergraduate and 3 graduate students as well as 1 postdoc at the University of Winnipeg, a primarily undergraduate university. He has served on 16 graduate student committees and influenced countless other students through his many years of university teaching.

This award is particularly meaningful as Scott and Jamie have a prior connection. Jamie taught some of the labs and field trips Scott took at UBC. Jamie was very encouraging when Scott started publishing some of his bird observations in publications like *The Murrelet* in the early 1980s. Over the years, Jamie became one of Scott's favourite professors and colleagues. Indeed, Scott has indicated that much of his generous and understanding teaching style is thanks to an early interaction Scott's future wife had with Jamie—she had gotten the time wrong on a final exam and walked in at the end of the exam period, much to his dismay. Rather than failing her outright, Jamie graciously allowed her to take the exam anyway, a practice of understanding and accommodation that Scott has carried forward into his own careful and productive mentorship of dozens of students ever since.

I met Scott in 2005 as the instructor of my very first university course—introductory biology. I was a keen but nervous young student; sure I wanted to study biology, but with no clear idea of where to focus. I was drawn to Scott's passion for ornithology and ecology, and to his wit (Scott would often incorporate jokes about his then-young children, affectionately dubbed 'Spud' and 'Lumpy', into his lectures). Scott was always approachable and had a knack for explaining difficult concepts clearly and easily. I soon became enamoured with birds and approached Scott seeking opportunities to gain research experience and to study birds further. Scott hired me as a field technician and I

went on to work with Red-winged Blackbirds at his long-term field site near Rosser, Manitoba, for the remainder of my undergraduate degree, from 2008 – 2011. During this time, I completed my undergraduate thesis on nest predation in blackbirds and held an NSERC USRA under Scott's supervision.

Scott was an excellent mentor who instills a sense of integrity in others by example. He patiently demonstrated protocols on the proper handling of eggs and nestlings and communicated the slate of techniques he uses to minimize disruption to the marsh ecology. He taught me and his many other research assistants the ins and outs of his study system and how to keep careful, detailed field notes. Scott's approach is respectful of wildlife, people and the environment, and fosters warmth and comradery in his field teams. Further, Scott was always available to answer my bird ID questions both in the field and on the many occasions I would pop into his office unannounced, a budding birder with an insatiable curiosity. I fondly recall Scott pointing out wetland bird species to me during our field work. From him, I learned to appreciate the Wilson's Snipe, Sora, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Bobolink, Marsh Wren, Northern Harrier and countless others. As a biologist, Scott taught me not only about species ID, but generously shared his wealth of knowledge on the life history and ecology of these birds that makes each species so truly unique.

Leanne Grieves, August 6, 2019

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