

The Jamie Smith Memorial 2009 Award for Mentoring in Ornithology

It is with great pleasure that the Society of Canadian Ornithologists presented the award to:

Dr. Spencer G. Sealy
Professor
University of Manitoba



There is no doubt that Spencer Sealy is an outstanding biologist and has had a significant contribution on ornithology in Canada. The 24 letters of nomination/support that Spencer received for the Jamie Smith Mentoring Award, however, also attest to his obvious impact on those with whom he works. Many wrote of Spencer's long hours in the office (on weekends and holidays too), intentionally set so as to ensure adequate contact time with students while also fulfilling his administrative duties. The letters of support also referred to the Spencer "chats" which appear to be informal hallway conversations that students truly appreciated. Former students also recalled memories of the pages full of red ink after a "Spencer edit", attesting to a care about his students and the progress that they were making - it takes a long time to edit a students' work and Spencer clearly gave them this time. This benefited the students in improving their written work and also helped the students learn the process of both designing experiments and expressing their ideas. Many spoke of how Spencer encouraged and directed his former students, giving them the right combination of hands-on and hands-off support, providing them the confidence and ability to pursue graduate degrees and continue work in ornithology. Spencer's contributions did not end in the office but extended to the field where he devoted much time in the day to day basics of research—helping students slog through marshes or climb trees to find nests. Simply being with them in the field to assist doing whatever was needed (often difficult to schedule for faculty with high administrative duties) and is a contribution that his students acknowledged over and over again. There is an overall sense that Spencer really likes his students and that the "training of highly qualified personnel" is a task that he took on with great delight. This is evident in the letters, many of which stated that

Spencer set up an environment in his lab that fostered mutual respect and collaborations not just between himself and his students, but also amongst the students themselves.

On behalf of the award committee, I would like to congratulate Spencer on his achievements and encourage others to consider making nominations of supervisors and peers for next year's awards.

Ken Otter, Chair,
Jamie Smith Memorial Mentoring Award Committee