

CELEBRATING YUKON'S BIODIVERSITY: A QUICK REFERENCE

Yukon Biodiversity Awareness Month

April is Biodiversity Awareness Month! Every year Biodiversity Awareness Month is celebrated in Yukon with events that celebrate all living things and the role they play in keeping our ecosystems healthy. National Wildlife Week, Celebration of Swans, Earth Day, Biodiversity Forum, and the Environment Fair all occur this month.

The “Yukon Celebrates Spring” flyer (householder) is sent to out to Yukoners every spring. This flyer includes all the details about the biodiversity events take place in Yukon. For more information please visit the Wildlife Viewing on the Environment Yukon website at: www.environmentyukon.gov.yk.ca.

2010 International Year of Biodiversity (IYB)

Celebrate International Year of Biodiversity in your school! 2010 was declared as IYB by the United Nations to celebrate life on earth and the value that biodiversity has in daily life. IYB allows countries all over the world to show why biodiversity is important to them and what they are doing to preserve biodiversity in their own countries.

So what are other countries doing to celebrate IYB? Check out the IYB website at www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/.

Biodiversity Awareness Awards

The Biodiversity Awareness Award is presented annually by the Biodiversity Working Group. It honours those who have made major contributions to raising awareness about biodiversity and its importance. It was first presented in 2001.

Consider nominating individuals who you think have promoted biodiversity awareness and stewardship in Yukon. Please provide a short, written description of 250-500 words outlining the contribution your nominee has made and send it to Scott Gilbert (email at sgilbert@yukoncollege.yk.ca).

Deadline for nominations is end of February and one or more recipients will be chosen by secret ballot by the committee at their March meeting. The award will be presented at the Biodiversity Forum which is held every April.

Past recipients include:

Helmut Grünberg (2001)

Helmut has served the Yukon enthusiastically for over 3 decades, sharing a wealth of expertise about biodiversity.

Helmut is a founding member of the Yukon Bird Club and director for the past fifteen years; leading countless birdwatching trips, bird counts and breeding bird surveys. An editor for the Northwestern Canada Region of American Birds of the National Audubon Society for nine years, Helmut continues to be a vital link between Yukon and the North American birding community. Helmut published his detailed observations of one of the Yukon's rich wetlands in *Birds of Swan Lake, Yukon (1994)*, and is an author of *Birds of the Yukon Territory (2003)*.

While best known for birdwatching activities, his contributions to Yukon's biodiversity are extensive. Helmut has served as director for the Yukon Conservation Society, founding their renowned Nature Appreciation Series and is an active voice for ecosystem conservation and climate change within the territory.

Robert Frisch (2001, posthumously)

An ornithologist, botanist and moreover, truly unique spirit, Robert (Bob) Frisch touched the hearts and minds of many who now follow his footsteps.

Bob moved to the Klondike Valley in 1970, and was renowned for his epic solo journeys through the Tombstone region. An "old school naturalist" learning through field experiences, he had a reverence for the wilderness and an insatiable curiosity. The "initial roving Dempster interpreter", Bob would hitchhike the highway, telling people about the area and its natural history.

Bob spent countless hours along the Dempster and into the mountains searching for bird life; perhaps his most significant find being the first known nest-sites of Surfbirds in Canada. Eventually Bob compiled his observations into his book *Birds by the Dempster Highway* (1982), which 20 years since his passing, remains the definitive birding resource of the region.

Charlie Peter Charlie (2002)

Charlie was a key figure in the establishment of the Porcupine Caribou Management Board. With his seemingly endless knowledge of the Old Crow area, Charlie served as guide and consultant to several generations of researchers working in the Yukon. Always a strong supporter of environmental issues in the Old Crow region, Charlie has kept traditional knowledge alive with his stories about caribou and "how things used to be".

Charlie spent his childhood around the head of the Porcupine River learning the traditional ways of hunting, fishing and trapping, and the biology of the land. In 1988, his many years of service to Old Crow, to the Gwich'in language and traditional knowledge, and to the Yukon as a whole were recognized as Charlie Peter Charlie was admitted to the Order of Canada.

Phil Caswell (2005, posthumously)

Phil volunteered thousands of hours to Kluane National Park Reserve, investigating, collecting and identifying plants from the Park and surrounding areas. Perhaps his two greatest Yukon discoveries were Bering Sea Dock, a species new to Canada, and the rediscovery of Yukon Draba, Canada's rarest plant.

Studying plants for 20 years in Alaska and the Yukon, Phil was exceptionally talented in his field, but exceedingly humble, calling himself a "plant chaser", fearing the term botanist too professional. Phil's energy was inspiring and unending. Even in his last days of life, his concern was to ensure that his work at Kluane would continue.

Bill Cody (2006)

A pioneer amongst northern botanists, W.J. (Bill) Cody is recognized for his remarkable contributions to our knowledge of the plants of the Yukon.

Starting his Yukon fieldwork in the 1960s, Cody had the monumental task of classifying the Yukon's unique and diverse flora. He spent the next 20 years collecting plant specimens, ensuring the most complete collection possible. *Flora of the Yukon* (1996), his best known contribution to northern botany, quickly became a benchmark in taxonomic keys.

From 1946 to 1987 Cody was employed with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada as plant taxonomist and curator of Canada's largest collection of plants. Extraordinarily committed

to his work, as an Honorary Research Associate, in retirement Bill continues to provide an enormous amount of information on plants to the agricultural sector, natural resources staff, wildlife biologists, First Nations, and landscape planners. Always willing to help, every year he identifies thousands of Yukon plants and continues to publish articles on the flora of the Yukon in scientific journals.

Manfred Hoefs (2007)

Manfred in his quiet, methodical way is a tremendous believer and supporter of biodiversity; furthering the aims of biodiversity and accomplishing significant stewardship goals in an era when biodiversity was still being defined.

One of Manfred's most enduring traits is a steadfast, often wonderfully stubborn conservation ethic. Endangered species management has always been a passion of Manfred's, as is seen in the remarkable success of the Wood Bison Recovery Project. His work on the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada and the Endangered Species Act will be an enduring Yukon legacy.

Manfred first arrived to the Yukon a PhD candidate studying Dall's sheep and their critical habitats in Kluane. Some of the first and decisive lobbying for the eventual creation of Kluane National Park came from his work in those days.

Dave Mossop (2008)

Veteran educator and biologist Dave Mossop has spent the past 38 years sharing his vision to love and appreciate nature.

Dave's biodiversity databases, unrivalled in Yukon, have raised awareness of birds of prey, ducks, geese, swans, grouse, ptarmigan and songbirds. The cornerstones of Biodiversity Awareness in Yukon including programs such as Celebration of Swans, Swan Haven, the

Dempster Interpretive Centre, Yukon Wildlife Preserve, Yukon's Wildlife Viewing Program, the Biodiversity Working Group, and the Biodiversity Forum, have arisen out Dave's efforts to raise awareness of biodiversity and biodiversity issues.

He has made hundreds of forays into classrooms to inspire children, many of those presentations remain ingrained in the youth and young adults today. Dave continues to raise the awareness of biodiversity to a new generation of researchers and communicators as an instructor and researcher at Yukon College, Whitehorse.

Ted Murphy-Kelly (2010)

Ben Schoneville (2010)

Biodiversity Links

Yukon Biodiversity Awareness Month
www.taiga.net/spring/biodiversity.html

2010 International Year of Biodiversity
www.cbd.int/2010/welcome/

Wild BC
www.wildbc.org/

Environment Canada: International Year of Biodiversity
www.ec.gc.ca/Envirozine/default.asp?lang=En&n=5EC385CB-1

Nature Conservancy Canada
www.natureconservancy.ca/site/PageServer?pagename=ncc_work_feature36

Wild ED
www.wilded.org/index.html

Global Environmental & Outdoor Education Council
www.geoec.org/lessons/

American Museum of Natural History
www.amnh.org/ology/?channel=biodiversity

Convention on Biological Diversity
www.cbd.int/

Biodiversity Project
www.biodiversityproject.org/

Canadian Biodiversity Information Network
www.cbin.ec.gc.ca/

Canadian Centre for Biodiversity
nature.ca/research/ccb_e.cfm

Natural History Museum
www.nhm.ac.uk/research-curation/research/projects/worldmap/diversity/