

THE LINNAEAN
NEWS



LETTER

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AWARDS COMMITTEE REPORT

Helen Hays

The Awards Committee was formed in 1982 to review candidates for the Society's Eisenmann Medal. The medal is named in memory of Society past-president and Fellow, Eugene Eisenmann. Gene Eisenmann was himself an "amateur" ornithologist. Ornithology is one of the few biological sciences where "amateurs", those not formally trained in biology or without an advanced degree in science, have made significant contributions to the advancement of the field. Gene retired early from his law practice and devoted the rest of his life to the study of birds, particularly Neotropical birds. He became a Research Associate in the Ornithology Department at the American Museum of Natural History, where he served as resident expert on the birds of Middle America. He published in scientific journals and served as editor of *The Auk*. He had a worldwide reputation in ornithology. Highly esteemed as a scientist, Gene was also known for his willingness to spend countless hours advising students, amateur birders, and all people who came to him with bird questions.

The Eisenmann Medal is given to an individual who has achieved in ornithology (published papers/books) and who has helped amateurs interested in birds. Gene was always willing to help birders in the Linnaean Society

when they came to the Museum. As editor of *The Auk* he once received a piece written by a Canadian high school student. The paper needed work. Gene did not reject the piece, but worked with the student through correspondence, and later published the paper in *The Auk*. The student is a well-known ornithologist in Canada today.

Members of the Awards Committee often are puzzled by the contribution to the amateur part of the stated definition of the Eisenmann Medal. It is important to remember in thinking about contribution to the amateur that this is an individual's contribution. Often professional ornithologists, teachers, writers, artists, in carrying out their work help many individuals, however, these people do not necessarily qualify for the Eisenmann Medal unless, as individuals they have helped amateurs, working with them as individuals, advising them and encouraging their interest in birds.

The first Eisenmann Medal was awarded to Ernst Mayr in 1983 at the annual meeting of the Linnaean Society. Between 1983 through 2013 the medal has been awarded to twenty-four recipients:

1983 Ernst Mayr
1984 Joseph Hickey

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1985 Olin S. Pettingill
1986 Roger T. Peterson
1987 Chandler Robbins
1988 Frank Gill
1989 Helen Hays
1990 Stuart Houston
1991 David Wingate
1993 Stuart Keith
1995 Guy Tudor
1998 Dean Amadon
2001 Robert Ridgely
2002 William Clark
2003 Gary Stiles
2004 Erica Dunn & David Hussell
2005 John Fitzpatrick
2006 David Sibley
2008 Malcolm Coulter
2009 Kenneth V. Rosenberg
2011 Alvaro Jaramillo
2012 Clive Minton
2013 Kenn Kaufman

After the formation of the Awards Committee the Society's Council, asked the Committee to submit nominations to the Council for Fellow and Honorary Member of the Society. Previously, the Council as a whole originated these nominations. Members considered for Fellow are those who have worked hard for the Society in ways not required by an office and for a time not defined by an office. Honorary Members have included ornithologists from all over the world that the Society would like to honor by including them in its membership. According to the Society's constitution the number of Honorary Members should not exceed ten. Traditionally, people approved by the Council for these titles are elected by the membership at the Annual Meeting. The Society currently has nine Fellows and nine Honorary Members.

Fellows

Thomas Burke
John Cairns
Irving Cantor
Joseph DiCostanzo
Sheila Fitzpatrick
Helen Hays

Kathleen Howley
Emanuel Levine
Richard Lieberman

Honorary Members

2004 Dominique Homberger (USA)
2004 Kiyooki Ozaki (Japan)
2010 Orlando Garrido (Cuba)
2010 Arturo Kirkonnell (Cuba)
2010 Yossi Leshem (Israel)
2010 James Rising (Canada)
2011 Umberto Berlanga (Mexico)
2011 Tim Birkhead (England)
2012 Guy McCaskie (USA)

In recent years, the Council, at the suggestion of the Awards Committee initiated two other awards: the Shelda Taylor Award and the Natural History Service Award.

The Shelda Taylor Award is given in honor of Shelda Taylor who taught in the New York City school system. She emphasized Natural History and birds in her classes. This award has been given twice.

2006 Peter Joost for his work with high school students teaching them about birds and leading them on bird trips in the New York area and South America.

2011 Thom Schuchaskie for his work in the New York City School system, introducing children to the outdoors, through Urban Kid Adventures, a series of after school programs he initiated and designed to get children into the parks to identify birds, mammals, whatever they see. The program has been very successful.

The Natural History Service Award is given to individuals who have, through working with the public, triggered a lasting interest in natural history in many people. The recipients have been:

2006 Sarah Elliott for her signature work in introducing

the natural world to many people in Central Park.

2007 Starr Saphir for her years of teaching birding through her walks in Central Park.

2008 Mary Yrizarry for her efforts to save the last piece of unprotected land in Sterling Forest State Park.

2009 Darlene Smythe for her work in developing ways of making the outdoors accessible to handicapped individuals in state and federal parks.

2010 Don Riepe for his years of work in sparking an interest in natural history and concern for preservation of plants and animals in the New York area as well as in many places he has visited in other parts of the world.

2011 Jim Ash as the Executive Director of the South Fork Natural History Museum and vice-president of the South Fork Natural History Society, oversaw the construction of the museum and its innovative exhibits

2012 Micky Maxwell Cohen for his many years of trips at Jamaica Bay for birders and others through the American Littoral Society.

As part our celebration of our Linnaean Society Centennial, the society awarded 50 year members with a Peregrine Falcon statuette/paper weight executed by Dave Schwendeman an artist in the Department of Exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History. Dave's Peregrine was based on a drawing by Linnaean member Richard Edes Harrison of a Peregrine sitting on the tower of the southeast corner of the American Museum and today appears as the logo on the *Linnaean News-Letter*.

One other responsibility of the Awards Committee is to recommend to the Council possible nominees for the Stoner Award of the New York State Ornithological Association. Several of our nominees have won the award.

This is my final report as Chairman of the Awards Committee. I have thoroughly enjoyed my tenure as chairman and have worked with wonderful people on the committee. I submitted my resignation to Alice Deutsch in December of 2012 because I had reached a point where I had to spend more time on the Great Gull Island Project and less time on everything else! Super Storm Sandy had taken out our new dock and it wasn't clear what should be done next. We still do not have a dock, but do have some leads. Following my resignation Jeff Nulle became the interim chair of the Awards committee from January 2013 to early June 2013. I was delighted when Steve Chang accepted the chairmanship of the Awards Committee and very pleased when he asked me to stay on the committee. Good luck Steve and all the best as we move ahead!

We are looking forward to hearing Sophie Webb, the 2014 Eisenmann Medalist at the Annual Meeting on March 11, 2014. Sophie is the co-author (with Steve N. G. Howell) and illustrator of *A Guide to the Birds of Mexico and Northern Central America* (1995, Oxford university Press). She has contributed illustrations to *Birds of Venezuela: Second Edition* by Steven L. Hilty (2003, Princeton University Press), *Birds of Peru* by Thomas S. Schulenberg, Douglas F. Stotz, Daniel F. Lane, John P. O'Neill, and Theodore A. Parker III (2007, Princeton University Press), and *Birds of Brazil: The Pantanal & Cerrado of Central Brazil* by John A. Gwynne, Robert S. Ridgely, Guy Tudor and Martha Argel (2010, Comstock Publishing Associates). She is also a co-founder and board member of the conservation organization Oikonos

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**PROGRAM CHANGES**

December 10, 2013 6:00 pm pre-meeting: The program originally scheduled – “Fall Migration Round-up” with Angus Wilson – has been postponed until the fall of 2014. In its place will be the 6:00 pm program originally scheduled for January 14, 2014, “Morning Flight” in which Benjamin Van Doren will discuss his research into the phenomenon of morning flight in migrating birds which won him fifth place in the national Intel Science Talent Search in 2012, when he was a senior in high school.

January 14, 2014 6:00 pm pre-meeting: Replacing Benjamin Van Doren’s talk which has been moved up to December 10, 2013 (see above) will be “Extraordinary Birds” with Paul Sweet. Paul is the Collection Manager in the Ornithology Department of the American Museum of Natural History (in charge of the department's many different collections) and the author of the recent book *Extraordinary Birds*, the second in the Museum’s *Natural Histories* series, which traces the entwined histories of art and science through illustrated works from the museum’s Rare Book Collection. He will discuss his book, which features bird illustrations from forty rare volumes with accompanying essays (the boxed set also contains these illustrations as separate frameable prints). He writes, “I examine the history of ornithological illustration from the Renaissance to the 20th century, tracing the development of printing techniques, world exploration and scientific thought, and tell the stories of important figures from the history of ornithology.”

**ACTIVITIES FOR MEMBERS ONLY**

January 4, 2014: The class on drawing birds with Alan Messer has had to be postponed. A new date in the spring of 2014 will be announced when scheduled.

**CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**  
**ANNOUNCEMENT**

**JAMAICA BAY TASK FORCE MEETING**

A meeting of the Jamaica Bay Task Force will be held on Tuesday, December 3, 2013 at 6:30 PM at the visitor center at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. The agenda will include the rehabilitation of the refuge as well as broader issues concerning Gateway National Recreation Area. The public is invited – Linnaean members are urged to attend – but seating is limited.



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Editor: Joseph DiCostanzo  
Linnaean News-Letter  
15 West 77<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10024  
newsletter@linnaeannewyork.org  
Manuscript acquisition: Helen Hays  
Production and mailing: Thomas Endrey