

Recommendation of Pat and Paul Bigelow for the Honorary Life Membership Award,
Waterloo Region Nature

This prestigious award acknowledges the valuable and exceptional service made to Waterloo Region Nature. The Honorary Life Membership is awarded for specific service to Waterloo Region Nature (rather than for service in/to the community that may have directly or indirectly benefitted the club). This honour is highly valued, is awarded infrequently, and is given only to the most deserving of members. Honorary Life Members shall be entitled to all privileges of membership but shall not be required to pay annual dues.

Not everyone knows Paul and Pat and few people know what they do for the club or have done over the years. And yet, everyone would notice if they didn't do what they do. It's all done quietly, competently and in the background, with a list of tasks that's consistently growing rather than shrinking

Paul and Pat joined the club in November of 1985. Shortly after moving their family from Toronto to Waterloo, Paul attended an open house sponsored by the GRCA at Laurel Creek Nature Centre. At this event, he picked up a KWFN brochure, and their lives were forever changed!

Regarding Paul:

Perhaps, Paul's greatest contribution to the club is his serving as Treasurer for a total of nine years, from 2002/07 and from 2012 to current.

He has steadily handled all financial aspects of the club from collecting membership dues, to managing the investments of the club, to preparing financial reports, processing income tax receipts, managing the sale of guidebooks, and forecasting budgets. He has done this all in a manner that instills confidence in his decisions and a feeling that he is always working with the best interests of the club in mind.

Paul has also been invaluable as the Board's techie go-to person and he has been instrumental in moving the club into the social media age.

- Paul played a critical role in launching the much-enhanced WRN website. He was active on the committee that designed the club website. When it encountered difficulties in turning the concept into a working web site at reasonable cost, it was Paul who stepped up and finished the coding in just a few weeks.
- Paul also volunteered to take over from Larry Hamell to become the club's new website manager.
- Paul was instrumental in working with a colleague outside the club who compiled WRN's Facebook page.
- He did the research and implementation of PayPal which allows individuals to pay their memberships and charitable donations on-line.

- He spearheaded the use of MailChimp as a way of sending digital announcements to the membership in a timely, far-reaching and cost-effective way.
- Paul was absolutely pivotal in launching the WRN EcoPosts. When Roger Suffling was writing the EcoPost web pages he frequently turned to Paul to help with coding issues.
- Paul arranged for and managed the proxy server for both the WRN site and for EcoPosts

When not busy with Board functions or behind a computer, Paul gets outdoors. Over the years, his knowledge and identification of birds has grown steadily to the point where he helps record sightings at the club's annual Great Backyard Bird Count held every February.

Paul's interest in wildflowers blossomed as well. He has led club botany outings over the decades both locally and to the Bruce Peninsula – notably to Dorcas Bay, the Bruce Alvar Nature Reserve, the Petrel Point Nature Reserve and to the Oliphant Fen.

Regarding Pat:

Little known fact: Pat was actually club treasurer before Paul was, from 1993 to 1996.

Pat was a founding member of the Young Naturalists Club back in 1999 and has been a constant presence since.

Pat works behind the scenes doing a variety of jobs, including

- developing programs
- preparing information pamphlets, waivers and registration forms
- arranging distribution of brochures/publicity materials to appropriate venues
- acting as a contact person for interested members and their parents
- receiving registration forms and maintaining membership lists
- recruiting and organizing volunteers

Pat brings to the YNC a genuine interest in the natural world and an interest in those people who enjoy the natural world. She is the perfect people greeter as she is unfailingly welcoming and cheerful in her demeanor. She is the backbone to the YNs and makes the club stronger by her presence.

Aside from her work in Young Nats, Pat has become the unofficial photographer for the club. One often sees her at club outings and functions with a camera and telescopic lens strapped around her neck. Over the years, she has provided many photographs for the Heron newsletter, the club's archives, and most recently, the club's new website.

Pat and Paul were early members of the Montgomery Committee which manages the club's Montgomery Wildlife Sanctuary. They continue to help with inspecting the property, maintaining the trail and reducing periwinkle numbers. They are active participants in the annual garlic mustard pull.

In addition, they have both spent time staffing the WRN table at various public events.

None of these initiatives could have been launched without the Bigelow's considerable expertise and hard work which were invariably delivered with great selflessness and humility. Congratulations!