



June 23, 2016

## Letter of Support

Dear Award Committee,

It is my absolute pleasure to write this letter in support of a nomination to recognize David Gascoigne and his never wavering commitment to volunteerism, conservation, and the love of birds and the community in Waterloo and beyond.

As anyone who has worked with him would agree, David is an extraordinary, inspirational leader who works tirelessly for countless volunteer projects and organizations. I personally, have had the good fortune of working directly with David in my role as Executive Director of **rare Charitable Research Reserve**, an urban land trust and environmental institute protecting 900+ acres of conservation land in the Grand River watershed, and also as fellow board member of Waterloo Region Nature, the local nature club. I hold him in the highest esteem.

David contributes in many different ways with volunteer leadership, scientific data collection, communications, education of others, particularly younger generations, and I have found in him a valuable mentor in all things birds. His volunteer work as bird monitor at **rare**, and his contributions to communications such as our blog, is valued thousands of dollars in in-kind expertise. We have been that much more successful because of his help and literally could not conduct bird monitoring and education without volunteers like David due to our limited staffing levels. The countless hours David puts into his volunteer work at **rare** allows other staff to truly focus on their roles, which allows us to move our conservation mission forward in a financially sustainable manner, protecting habitats and species that are considered a national treasure. I know it's not just **rare** he supports in this way, he does the same for other landowners and researchers, for example at the University of Waterloo, who could not afford to conduct this important work without outstanding volunteers like David.

David always has an open ear for young people who want to eventually follow his footsteps, and guides them with great enthusiasm and passion. His involvement in going above and beyond became evident in the bird-themed playscape he developed for the new Westmount Sports Park, which is well loved already by many little environmentalists in this area. As a conservationists and mother of a four year old who loves birds, we tested it and can only say: Thank you for a job so extraordinarily well done!

All this shows that David has never ending energy and passion for creating great communities and improving the quality of life for everyone- and being an advocate for a healthy environment is paramount for everyone's well-being. In the past year, he has also helped as member of an ad-hoc committee that allowed **rare** to plan for stepping up as a regional land trust, securing more land in Waterloo Region, with the help of other organizations and individuals such as David. His support is incredibly valuable to us and I hope that we can retain him as one of our key volunteers for many years to come- his work makes a big difference for the lives of many people in Waterloo and beyond.

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Sandy Shantz, Mayor  
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Dave Jaworsky, Mayor  
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David is an inspiration for others, keeps everyone engaged, and is in fact a real dynamo who never fails to bring old and new supporters to the table, thereby increasing our capacity in a way we never could with staff support alone.

I'm so thrilled that David is nominated for the award, because it's so well deserved and I can recommend him without reservation. Thank you so much for considering David Gascoigne for the 2016 Waterloo Award. I truly hope he will be selected.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Sobek-Swant'.

Dr. Stephanie Sobek-Swant,

Executive Director, *rare* Charitable Research Reserve

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