

2012 Tudor Richard Award

As presented by Paul Nickerson at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 29, 2012.

New Hampshire Audubon's Tudor Richards Award is presented each year to someone who best exemplifies Tudor's love and knowledge of the outdoors, and who works tirelessly and effectively for conservation in the state. The award this year goes to Art Mudge.

It's long been obvious to those of us who have served on New Hampshire Audubon's Board of Trustees that Art has made a tremendous contribution to our organization in many ways and for many years. Well, it turns out that's true for some other organizations around our state.

Art's strong connections to the natural world were formed in large part when he was a camper and then counselor at Camp Pasquaney on Newfound Lake. His commitment to that camp, and to other young people having a similar experience, led to long service on the Pasquaney board and eventual emeritus trustee status.

Pasquaney is a camp for boys. Art also served on and chaired the board of Camp Onaway, a camp for girls on Newfound Lake. He also was instrumental in starting the Circle Program, a summer camp and mentoring program for at-risk New Hampshire girls. He chaired that board and helped fundraise for the Circle Program's new camp on Spectacle Pond in Groton. In fact, the Camp's director said he was "the driving force in raising the money."

Art is a driving force. . . I suspect that anyone who has been on a board or committee with Art would agree that he is a driving force—a thoughtful, deeply committed advocate for what's wise and right and forward-thinking.

He is a long-time trustee and past board chair of the Josiah Bartlett Center for Public Policy. He has served as a trustee of the Upper Valley Land Trust. He also served on The Nature Conservancy's New Hampshire Chapter board for many years.

Art Mudge shared Tudor Richards's love and knowledge of the outdoors, and his commitment to work tirelessly on its behalf—in particular so that young people can have the opportunity to connect deeply with the natural world. And the not so young, as well. Art is a longtime birding field trip leader.

And you never know where he'll pop up. Steve Mirick was birding with Davis Finch in Guyana 14 years ago. The first morning Steve got up bright and early—of course. He saw a fellow with binoculars and approached him to ask what birds were in the area. It was Art Mudge. Art knows his South American birds as well as his North American. In fact he organized trips to the Caribbean with Tudor and Larry Sunderland to extend their knowledge of where "our birds" spend the winter.

Dick Beyer, former Audubon trustee and Camp Pasquaney camper, had Art as a camp counselor. Dick was talking recently to Pasquaney campers and counselors about his formative memories of Art, and a 15-year-old camper approached him later and introduced himself. It was Art's grandson.



Art Mudge receiving the 2012 Tudor Richards Award from Barbara Richards. Photo by R.A. Quinn.

Serving on the NH Audubon board with Art, Dick Beyer remembers they shared a love for Audubon's education programs—and a love for balanced budgets. Dick writes about Art:

“I have always admired his energy and his tenacity when he has his sights set on a project that will benefit children or conservation in New Hampshire.”

Art has been an active NH Audubon board member for more than 18 years. He has served on many committees and often taken on special complex assignments, such as the complicated negotiations for the acquisition of the Massabesic Audubon property. He has dedicated years of service to NH Audubon and helped the organization tackle important conservation issues.

It is with great pleasure that New Hampshire Audubon presents the Tudor Richard's Award to Art Mudge. I know Tudor would approve.

Art Mudge made the following acceptance speech that resonated with many and

I have no illusions about my modest achievements in conservation being at all comparable to those of Tudor Richards. But I do appreciate, and thank you for the honor of such association with my good friend, Tudor. And Barbara, your presence here happily reminds Mary and me of how we got to know you and Tudor in the best possible way, roaming Jamaica and Hispaniola with our mutual friends Larry and Pia Sunderland, helping Tudor track down the endemic species of those islands which were so fascinating to him.

I now ask your indulgence in a few moments of reflection. I grew up on a small farm in Northwood. With the nearest human playmate over a mile away, it came naturally for me to empathize with our dogs and horses and all the other animals on the farm, including the twittering swallows in the barn, the loons calling from nearby Bow Lake, the whip-poor-wills lulling me to sleep in the summer night.

In time however, particularly with the birds, I became frustrated by my inability to see them any better than was possible with the three power opera glasses which were all my parents could afford. My interests strayed from nature until my return from the Korean War, when good optics became much more accessible and I was able to reengage with the birds especially, which were of constant interest for the rest of my life.

Now, thanks to modern technology, good wildlife viewing is accessible to just about anyone. But watching my grandchildren I see that modern technology has put other implements in their hands such as Game Boys and I-Pads to lure them away from the outdoors. I see this as the great challenge for NH Audubon in the years ahead, to engage our children, our future generations, with nature and the natural world.

It is vital for two reasons. First, for their benefit as human beings, to know the natural world and appreciate its constancy and beauty. When the troubles of their human world seem to be overwhelming, they can always go for a walk in the great out-of-doors and find comfort and inspiration. And, second, motivated by that appreciation for their natural world, our progeny too will become good custodians of it for the future.

Thanks again.