

2022 Tudor Richards Award

Presented by Paul Doscher at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 17, 2022.

Each year since 1983, NH Audubon has presented the Tudor Richards award to an individual or individuals who have worked tirelessly and effectively for conservation in the Granite State.

The recipient of the 2021 Tudor Richards Award is Sarah Thorne.

Sarah is well known to many of us, but for those who are not familiar with her extraordinary achievements, here is an abbreviated list. Sarah's work on behalf of New Hampshire's landscape, people and wildlife began about four decades ago. Here are some of the highlights.

Beginning as a land protection specialist in the early 1980s at the Society for the Protection of NH Forests (Forest Society), Sarah worked with many landowners protecting lands through the then relatively new tool of conservation easements. Among her notable accomplishments was a project in Maine, where the Forest Society had created a small subsidiary organization called the Forest Society of Maine. Sarah negotiated and then stewarded the first large conservation easement in Attean on more than 18,000 acres protecting 15 miles of lake frontage scenic islands, mountain slopes and productive forest land. Later the Forest Society of Maine fledged from its New Hampshire nest and now has become one of the most successful land trusts in the nation

Her experience with the Forest Societies led to her next role. She served as the Executive Director of the Trust for New Hampshire Lands, the non-profit partner of the Land Conservation Investment Program (LCIP) that ran from 1987 through 1992. Funded by an act of the legislature, together the Trust and LCIP protected more than 100,000 acres of land, throughout New Hampshire in partnership with land trusts, towns, cities and state agencies. What she created at Trust for New Hampshire Lands and LCIP established much of the working foundation for the future Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) that is so successful today.

Following the Trust for NH Lands she did an encore performance at the Forest Society, when she became the Research Director. There she spearheaded the publication that identified the state's key drinking water supplies and their lack of protection. This work led to the creation of the state's Water Supply Land Protection Program. Also, from her desk came a report on New Hampshire's Vanishing Forests and New Hampshire Everlasting, the Forest Society's strategic vision on its 100th anniversary.



Sarah Thorne, receiving NH Audubon's 2022 Tudor Richards Award.

Photo by Rebecca Suomala.

When Sarah went home at night she didn't seem to rest much. She served 10 years on the Gilmanton Planning board and helped create the Gilmanton Land Trust in 1997. Never appearing to lack interest in new challenges, in 2002 she departed the Forest Society and went back to school for a teaching certificate at the University of New Hampshire. Her new career as a biology teacher at the then new Prospect Mountain High School continued for 14 years during which she took advantage of adjoining conservation land to get her students into the real world one day a week for the entire school year. Understanding the importance and urgency of the climate crisis she developed a climate science class giving her students the intellectual tools to reach their own conclusions about climate change without imposing her own strongly held opinions.

Once again taking on a new role, Sarah retired from public school education in 2016 and took her immeasurable skills to the Hubbard Brook Research Foundation where she has helped lead a Sugar Maple Regeneration Study and trained science teachers in area schools. Still not finding the need to relax at home, she has continued to work as a volunteer with the Five Rivers Conservation Trust, the Squam Lakes Conservation Society and Clean Energy NH.

Last year, she and her husband Tom Howe, (who passed away in a tragic accident in 2021) received the NH Conservation Cooperators of the Year award from the NH Association of Conservation Districts.

Thanks to Sarah, New Hampshire is a better place. Because of her passion and her dedication, our forests, farms and wildlife have benefited from the protection hundreds of important places. Her community and its citizens have benefited from her teaching and her leadership.

Those of us know Sarah well have all been blessed with a warm and sincere friendship. Some of the words others have used to describe her: hard worker, tireless, diplomatic, intelligent, great researcher, convener, committed, principled, passionate in a quiet, understated way, strategic thinker, and dedicated to lifelong learning, and teaching others. What an extraordinary career. And I'm sure she's not done yet!

It is my honor, on behalf of New Hampshire Audubon, to present the 2022 Tudor Richards Award to my good friend and colleague, Sarah Thorne.

