

## 2023 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award

*As presented by Diane De Luca at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 13, 2023.*

The John Thalheimer Volunteer Award has been presented annually since 1997. This award is dedicated to the first recipient, John Thalheimer, whose outstanding service to NH Audubon exemplified volunteer commitment, strengthened the organization, and provided an inspiring example for others.

I am honored and grateful to present the 2023 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award to Sandra Bowles. Sandy is my mentor for all things gardening in our Pollinator Gardens at the McLane Center in Concord. Prior to our pollinator garden restoration in 2019, Sandy singlehandedly maintained the gardens at the McLane Center for many years. When we transitioned to a pollinator garden in the fall of 2018 and spring of 2019, it was Sandy who led former staff member Hilary Chapman and I through the process. Her leadership is by example: she works incredibly hard, takes initiative when something needs doing, and always has a generous spirit and strong work ethic.

For me, Sandy is the perfect recipient of the John Thalheimer award. I was lucky enough to work with John when he was volunteering for NH Audubon, and more than lucky to work alongside Sandy as she gives her talents to NH Audubon. Stephen Walker, who helped to create this volunteer award, shared his inspiration. He felt strongly that the quiet worker bees also needed to be recognized. Sort of like E.O. Wilson's quote – "it's the little things that run the world." This is a perfect analogy for Sandy and her work in our pollinator spaces.

Sandy has been the key garden volunteer at the McLane Center for over 10 years. Over those years, she has given well over 3,000 hours of time. Sandy, along with the rest of our garden team, works tirelessly to keep the gardens looking beautiful. If she sees a need, she is right there to fill it. Sandy needs little, if any, direction to complete any and all tasks. She is usually the person leading the charge. Her style exemplifies leading by example...always unassuming, diligent, and reliable. She is definitely an inspiration to me. If you were to query her fellow volunteers, I am sure they would all be unanimous in her being an inspiration to each of them.

Sandy's volunteer efforts have a direct impact on the welcoming surroundings at our McLane Center. The gardens and growing pollinator habitats are enjoyed by many who visit, and Sandy is keenly aware of keeping them in an attractive condition. She is someone you will find sweeping and raking, and



*Sandra Bowles (left) receiving NH Audubon's 2023 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award from Diane De Luca.*

*Photo by Dyanna Smith.*

completing innumerable other tasks, to make sure this is so. Sandy never tires of suggestions for improvement, and I am incredibly thankful that she continues to jump right in to act on them.

The list of her contributions is long, and her impact on NH Audubon great. I truly can't think of another volunteer that I have had the pleasure to work with who reminds me more of John. Retired from a previous career, he immersed himself in volunteering for NH Audubon. Sandy also went from a full career as a school librarian to an active volunteer life. NH Audubon is one of the fortunate recipients of Sandy's dedication to a wide range of volunteer activities.

Thank you, Sandy, for all you have done and continue to do for NH Audubon. On behalf of all of us at NH Audubon, I am truly honored to present you with the 2023 John Thalheimer Volunteer Award.

