

2021 Tudor Richards Award

Presented by David Ries at the New Hampshire Audubon Annual Meeting, September 18, 2021.

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 Paul Nickerson.

Paul has devoted his life to the protection of rare and endangered species through his professional career and his volunteer work at the regional, state and local level. New Hampshire was among the states where Paul played a critical role in endangered species recoveries as longtime Chief of the US Fish & Wildlife Service's endangered species program in the Northeast Region.

Since the start of the program in 1975, through uncharted territory, he guided its work and growth.

When states were required to have a formal list of endangered wildlife in order to receive federal funding for their protection, Paul set out to make that happen. In 1979, Paul helped Meade Cadot and NH Audubon's Carol Foss organize a conference to produce a list. The invited bird specialists gathered in one room, mammal specialists in another, and herp specialists in another. By the end of the day, New Hampshire had its list.

Paul laid the foundation for the return of species such as the Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle to the state, both through direct action and by accessing federal support at a time when New Hampshire lacked funding resources. His partnership mindset brought organizations, including the Nature Conservancy, Appalachian Mountain Club and NH Audubon, into the endangered species conservation efforts in ways that continue to this day.

When the state's first known nesting pair of Bald Eagles in 40 years was in danger of nest failure, Paul quickly cut through red tape, something he was very good at. The result was the successful fostering of a zoo-raised eaglet into the wild at the Lake Umbagog nest site. Similarly, in 1981 he and Endangered Species Recovery Team colleague Rene Bollinger confirmed the first successful cliff-nesting Peregrine Falcons in the East in decades – under the gaze of the former Old Man of the Mountain in Franconia Notch.

His post-retirement, ongoing conservation activities include serving on his hometown conservation commission. In Londonderry, which has experienced some of the most rapid growth of any community in New Hampshire, Paul and the other commission members worked diligently to protect the town's wetlands and forests that support wildlife. On NH Audubon's board of trustees—as chair, as well as chairing the Environmental Policy Committee—he has provided invaluable input on numerous state and federal policy issues and initiatives. He has tirelessly advocated for sound environmental measures and



Paul Nickerson accepting NH Audubon's 2020 Tudor Richards Award.

Photo by Rebecca Suomala.

traveled to Washington, DC, to advocate for the environment before New Hampshire's congressional delegation.

Paul served as mentor to many biologists, including NH Audubon's Chris Martin who echoed a common theme: "Paul was always willing to listen, and to offer his advice and encouragement, something I will always remember and be grateful for."

He has brought the qualities he's been known for throughout his professional career to everything that he does: collaborative, even-handed, upstanding decency, a *great* sense of humor, and an abiding passion to protect the natural world. According to colleague Anne Hecht, Paul always prioritized the important things: conserving wildlife and nurturing the organizations and people who make that happen.

It is my honor, on behalf of NH Audubon, to present the 2021 Tudor Richards Award to Paul Nickerson.

