

March 5, 2004

Outstanding Conservationists Awarded Order of the Bighorn

Edmonton... Five of Alberta's fish and wildlife champions are being honoured for their exceptional efforts to promote wise use of our fisheries and wildlife resources.

Mike Cardinal, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, announced the names of those chosen as inductees into the Order of the Bighorn, Alberta's most prestigious wildlife conservation award.

Garry Hackler (Cowley), Ed Scarlett (Edmonton), Ryk Visscher (Edmonton), Donald Andersen (Rocky Mountain House) and Canadian Forces Base Suffield (Medicine Hat) are being inducted into the Order.

They will be honoured for their work at a banquet in Edmonton. The reception is being hosted and co-sponsored by the Alberta government, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc., Ducks Unlimited Canada, Luscar Ltd. and TransCanada Pipelines.

"Those we've chosen as members of the Order have shown great commitment to protecting Alberta's fish and wildlife for many years," said Minister Cardinal. "Their work has benefited the province and Albertans."

The Alberta government established the Order of the Bighorn in 1982 to recognize outstanding contributions to fish and wildlife conservation by individuals, organizations and corporations. Including the five awards being presented today, 87 of the honours have been awarded since the Order was established.

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2004 Alberta Order of the Bighorn

Recipients

Garry Hackler (*Cowley*)

Garry Hackler has been closely involved with fish and wildlife conservation in Alberta for many years. He is noted for the positive effect he has had on Alberta's youth, providing guidance through his conservation activities, educational efforts and personal example.

Diversity may be Garry's middle name. He has been an outdoor education instructor, hunter training instructor, outdoor education camp organizer, and guide to first-time hunters and anglers. During his numerous excursions with young Albertans, he has always stressed the importance of fish and wildlife conservation.

In addition to his strong involvement with wildlife conservation and education, he is also well known as a skilled wildlife artist and taxidermist. Accordingly, he makes excellent use of his mounted fish, game and birds in training sessions for youth and adults.

Garry has been involved with many conservation and fish and game groups over the years, either as a member or executive member, including the Willow Valley Trophy Club, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Trout Unlimited, the Oldman River Gun Club and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

Garry has also served with a number of government and community organizations, such as the Oldman River Dam Fish and Wildlife Advisory Committee.

Ed Scarlett (*Edmonton*)

Ed Scarlett has been involved with Alberta fish and game clubs in many capacities for about 40 years, including the Ponoka, Manning and Sherwood Park Fish and Game Associations, and the Foothills Gun Club.

With the Sherwood Park club, Ed produced the group's newsletter for 11 years, created target sighting systems, served as publicity director, established a first aid post, developed an emergency response plan, and organized programs for youth delegates at Alberta Fish and Game Association conventions.

He is an outstanding firearms, hunter education and emergency response instructor.

Ed is active in the community, sharing his love of hunting and fishing with school groups, community groups, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts. He also makes presentations to audiences about conservation ethics and promoting responsible resource management.

A highlight of his enthusiasm for the outdoors is Ed's success in developing and promoting the annual Narrow Lake Youth Camp. As camp director, he helped train camp counsellors and volunteers, and significantly increased enrolment at the facility, always promoting responsible hunting and angling.

Ryk Visscher (*Edmonton*)

When people think of hunting, they often think of Ryk Visscher, past president of the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society.

For many years, Ryk has worked to promote ethics in hunting and enhance the image of hunters and the role they play in conserving wildlife. He has also developed and delivered mentor programs for a number of wildlife organizations, to introduce youth and first-time hunters to hunting in a positive way.

His early interest in bowhunting led him to present a bowhunter education program, and to publish the first-ever *Bowhunting Records of Alberta*, published annually since 1983. He was director of the Alberta Bowhunters Association for more than 25 years.

Ryk established his own outfitting company in 1989. He has been featured on many TV and radio programs about hunting, and his magazine articles about the sport have appeared in a variety of outdoor publications.

Ryk has supported and participated in projects with many wildlife organizations, including the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Report A Poacher, Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation, Alberta Fish and Game Association, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep.

Donald (Don) Andersen (*Rocky Mountain House*)

Don Andersen is well known as a friend and advocate for trout and streams in west-central Alberta.

Don often volunteers to help biologists with fish surveys and planting trout eggs in his area. With Trout Unlimited, he organized more than 100 volunteer weekend work parties to rebuild stream banks by planting trees and vegetation to restore banks to their original condition.

In 1994, he began a three-year project to narrow more than 2 km of a creek that had become very wide and laden with silt, due to years of improper grazing practices and beaver activity. Don restored the stream banks by reseeding them with grass and planting trees.

He also worked to restore the Stainbrook Springs, a major trout spawning location. With the help of volunteers, Don flushed accumulated silt from the springs with powerful water pumps and planted many trees to restore the stream banks. When the Stainbrook

property came up for sale in 2001, he helped raise funds to purchase and preserve it for Albertans.

Over the years, Don has volunteered thousands of hours and his own resources to improve fisheries habitat and protect trout. He has also conducted fundraising activities in support of many wildlife conservation organizations.

Canadian Forces Base Suffield (*Medicine Hat*)

Personnel at Canadian Forces Base Suffield have demonstrated outstanding environmental stewardship and leadership for many years, in addition to regular military operations. Indeed, the 2,690 sq. km of native grass prairie that makes up the base is home to numerous species of wildlife and plants.

CFB Suffield has made significant progress in preserving sensitive environmental areas and protecting species such as the burrowing owl and Ord's kangaroo rat. In the spirit of good stewardship, the base accepted 220 elk that were relocated from Elk Island National Park in the 1990s and there are now about 800 elk in the region.

Over the years, the base maintained a close relationship with the Fish and Wildlife Division and supported many of the division's management studies and initiatives. For example, CFB Suffield provided funding for antelope helicopter surveys and studies, soldiers have assisted fish and wildlife officers with enforcement activities and the base has also occasionally provided helicopters for investigations. When large numbers of feral horses became a problem, soldiers supervised a round-up and found homes for all the horses.

Backgrounder

The Order of the Bighorn

The Award

In 1982, the Alberta government established the Order of the Bighorn to acknowledge contributions to fish and wildlife conservation that enrich the lives of Albertans. Traditionally, recipients have demonstrated a commitment to conservation over many years.

Past recipients of the Order of the Bighorn sit on the committee that reviews nominations for the award.

Deserving individuals or organizations are inducted into the Order every two years, at a reception in Edmonton or Calgary.

Including the 2004 recipients, 87 Orders of the Bighorn have been conferred since the recognition was established.

Those honoured become Members of the Order of the Bighorn, and receive a distinctive medallion with ribbon. The silver-coloured medallion features the head of a Rocky Mountain bighorn ram, with its striking curved horns.

In 1989, the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep was named Alberta's official mammal. There are approximately 40,000 bighorns in North America, ranging from northern Alberta to New Mexico. Alberta has the largest population, with about 10,000 animals.

The 2004 Order of the Bighorn co-sponsors are:

Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, AI-Pac (Alberta Pacific Forest Industries Inc.), Ducks Unlimited Canada, Luscar Ltd. and TransCanada PipeLines Ltd.
