

Bancroft native honoured as Conservation Hero



Ontario Nature, a leading environmental charity, announced the recipients of their annual Conservation Awards on June 11, 2022. The awards recognized the exceptional contributions made by individuals and organizations to protect wild species and wild spaces in Ontario. Among this year's 10 winners were Tweed residents, Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson. This husband and wife team was awarded the Ontario Nature Education Award for a lifetime devoted to educating and inspiring people of all ages to understand and appreciate the natural world so they too might become enthusiastic supporters of conservation and environmental protection. George and Elizabeth are longtime residents and tireless volunteers in the region. You must know them from somewhere. You might have worked at a school with them or remember one of them as your teacher. Both George and Elizabeth taught science for many years at public schools in the Hastings County area. Perhaps you have visited Churcher Woods in Bancroft. After inheriting a portion of her family's farm, Elizabeth and George donated 60 woodland acres to the Hastings Prince Edward Land Trust as a nature reserve to be used for educational purposes. If you read the Tweed News, you would have come across their weekly natural history column, "Naturally?". Before Covid, you could have met them at one of the monthly Quinte Field Naturalist meetings in downtown Belleville. Both are excellent naturalists. As President, George would have been chairing the meeting with charm and humour and Elizabeth would have been reporting on the recent nature advocacy letters she had written as Corresponding Secretary. Several years ago, you could have been on a Tweed Horticultural Garden Tour to "Hepatica Hill", their 100 acre farmstead come nature reserve, where they reduce their carbon footprint by growing the vast bulk of their own food while maintaining rich and varied habitat for wildlife. If you have driven through Tweed in summer, you passed by St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church where they

have been instrumental in turning the property into a beautiful vegetable garden to supply the food bank and a pollinator garden to feed butterflies, bees and birds. You may belong to one of the innumerable groups all over Hastings County and beyond, where George and Elizabeth have given their nature presentations over the years.

These are just a few highlights of a lifetime of passionate dedication to Nature that garnered Elizabeth Churcher and George Thomson the Ontario Nature Education Award. Humble about the recognition, their greatest wish is that they might inspire you to do everything you can to create a greener, more livable future for the generations to come.

Submitted by Ontario Nature