

NEWSROOM -

Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame announces its 19th annual induction ceremony

Three new inductees for ceremonies April 12 in Stevens Point

Three new inductees to Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in ceremonies to be held April 12 in Stevens Point.

This year's inductees into the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame are a woman who helped make recycling a household word and two educators whose expertise on plant life led to understanding and preservation of precious ecosystems.

Ingeborg "Inge" Lothe of Poynette is expected to be on hand Saturday, April 12, 2003, in Stevens Point, when she is inducted along with Forest Stearns, a University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee botanist, and James Hall Zimmerman, a naturalist and communicator at UW-Madison and across the state. The ceremony will be the Hall of Fame's 19th.

Tributes to the inductees will be given at 10 a.m. at Sentry Theater, located at the Sentry Insurance Headquarters, 1800 North Point Drive. A 9 a.m. coffee will precede the program. A luncheon at noon in The Restaurant of Sentry Insurance Headquarters concludes the day's activities. Luncheon reservations cost \$10 and can be made by calling 715-346-4992, the telephone number for the Schmeckle Reserve Visitors Center, where the Conservation Hall of Fame is located.

"As usual, our selection committees have chosen for induction outstanding individuals with an interesting mix of conservation contributions," said Earl Spangenberg, president of the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame Foundation. "In many ways, they were contemporaries who were engaged in complementary and very beneficial conservation activities."

Working in south central Wisconsin, Lothe was among early leaders who saw to it that municipal waste recycling became a reality. As a Columbia County Board member and chair, she led efforts to establish recycling programs that served as models for the rest of the state. Lothe also pushed to broaden the audience for environmental education. At the national level, she led conservation education efforts in the General Federation of Women's Clubs in the 1970s.

Stearns, 1918-98, was revered by his students at UW-Milwaukee and respected by colleagues across the state and nation. An expert on the plant life of the Lakes States Region, he advocated for the protection of species diversity. As a longtime member of Wisconsin's Scientific Areas Preservation Council, he helped see to it that dozens of natural areas were set aside across the state for study and preservation.

Zimmerman, 1924-92, brought important ecological messages to thousands of people of all walks of life as a naturalist, educator and communicator. He was equally adept at penning a newspaper column, leading a field trip and writing a detailed ecological study. He was a naturalist at the UW-Madison Arboretum from 1955 until his death in 1992. He also did extensive naturalist and fieldwork in Door County, Wisconsin.

His newspaper column appeared in the Wisconsin State Journal.

Bill Horvath, executive secretary of the Conservation Hall of Fame since its inception in 1985, took note of the accomplishments of this year's inductees. "Inge Lothe's contributions to recycling can't be overstated. She showed the way at the local and state level, then took the message to an important and influential national audience in the General Federation of Women's Clubs," he said.

"In addition to their work as educators and communicators, Stearns and Zimmerman both had key roles in preserving important natural areas, primarily for scientific research," Horvath said. "Stearns was a leader on the state Scientific Areas Preservation Council, started in the 1950s, and Zimmerman served as a technical advisor to the state's Scientific and Natural Areas Program. Both men have been described by colleagues as botanical geniuses.

How fortunate Wisconsin was to have them working in concert on preservation of diverse and important natural areas."

A Columbia County native, Lothe grew up on a dairy farm and later operated dairy and fur farms with her husband, Irvin.

Stearns was born in Shorewood and educated at Harvard and UW-Madison. He was a prolific writer, authoring more than 90 papers in scientific journals, many pertaining to Wisconsin plant life. He is also credited with pioneering urban forestry and urban ecology concepts.

A Chicago native, Zimmerman's many contributions included educating broad audiences about the importance of wetlands and the need to preserve them for their practical value, beauty and biological diversity. His wife, Elizabeth, herself a naturalist, was often at his side doing fieldwork.

The new inductees bring to 48 the number of people memorialized in the Conservation Hall. Located at Schmeckle Reserve in Stevens Point, it includes interactive displays and information on Wisconsin's conservation history and conservation leaders. Its purpose is to educate and inspire people with information about how resource conservation has shaped our environment and our lives. The surrounding nature reserve has extensive walking trails and is a link in the Stevens Point area's 25-mile Green Circle Trail.

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