

Paul Schnell honored with NYSOWA 'Pass It On' award

By Steve Piatt
Editor

Niagara Falls, N.Y. — Paul Schnell was surprised – stunned, actually – and thrilled when he learned he was the second recipient of the New York State Outdoor Writers' Association's annual "Pass It On" award.

So happy, he probably could have flown alongside the eagle and other raptors he's so well known for displaying as founder and director of the Institute for Environmental Learning.

"I've been fortunate over the years to receive awards, but when it comes from your peers it's very, very meaningful," Schnell said after being honored

Several arrests in Region 5

Staff report

Ray Brook, N.Y. — DEC Environmental Conservation officers this fall have arrested several individuals on charges ranging from shooting deer at night to hunting over bait.

at the joint gathering of the NYSOWA and the Association of Great Lakes Outdoor Writers this fall. "It's really an incentive to keep plugging along and giving more."

The Pass It On award, sponsored by Bass Pro Shops, is given annually by the NYSOWA to an individual who has gone to great lengths to pass on the outdoor heritage to others – particularly young people.

Last year's winner was Allen Benas, owner and operator of the Thousand Islands Inn and 1000 Islands Fishing Charters for his efforts in introducing youth to the sport of fishing.

Bass Pro Shops again this year made a \$300 donation in Schnell's name to the New York State Outdoor Writers' Association scholarship fund. Schnell, a member of the organization since 1988, is a freelance writer and noted wildlife photographer in addition to his work with the Institute for Environmental Learning.

"He's literally a bird-in-hand guy," said NYSOWA President Will Elliott. "Whenever a group needs a demonstration or program, Paul will be there with a live eagle or hawk that will have his audience 'rapt with raptors.'"

Schnell uses eagles, hawks, owls and falcons in many of his programs, but he also offers programs on wolves, bison and buffalo hunters, snakes, nature photography and Aldo Leopold's land ethic. He's usually assisted by his wife Anne, an environmental conservation professor at Finger Lakes Community College whose work with raptors includes a decade of capturing and banding wild birds at Braddock Bay as well as working with captive birds.

Schnell developed the Institute for Environmental Learning in 1982 (it was formerly known as the Conservation Lecture Series) to bring conservation topics into the classrooms of students in grades pre-kindergarten through college.

He holds a master banding license for marking wild raptors, is a practicing falconer and serves on several conservation boards.

He has also helped organize local cleanup efforts on area waterways and took an "Adopt a Sturgeon" program into local schools to create awareness of that unique fish.

Despite all those efforts in "passing it on," Schnell was shocked by the award.



Paul Schnell, recipient of the New York State Outdoor Writers Association's "Pass It On" award, is well-known for his presentations and programs raptors.

Photo courtesy of Paul Schnell

"I was actually late to the session, and watched the presentations of many other awards to people whom I thought were very deserving," he recalled. "Then at the end of the gathering, people started congratulating me. I said, 'for what?' I was really quite shocked, but thrilled at the

same time. It's a great thing Bass Pro does, donating to the scholarship fund."

For more information on the Institute for Environmental Learning, e-mail Schnell at programs@ielraptors.org or go online to www.ielraptors.org.