

DESMOND B.A. THOMPSON

is awarded the
CIEEM Medal 2019

for

Outstanding Contribution to Biodiversity Conservation and Upland Ecology

Professor Desmond (Des) Thompson FCIEEM FRSE is awarded the 2019 CIEEM Medal for his outstanding, life-long contribution to biodiversity conservation and upland ecology.

Des has a first-class Bachelor of Science degree in Biological Sciences from Paisley College (University of West Scotland), a PhD from the University of Nottingham for his research on the ecology and behavior of lapwings, gulls and plovers and a DSc, also from the University of Nottingham, for his work on nature conservation and the ecology of the British uplands.

A Liverpool University Fellowship in 1984-5 led to a move to the Nature Conservancy Council's (NCC) Chief Scientist Directorate as Senior Mountains and Moorlands Ecologist before moving to Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in 1992 as Head of the Uplands and Peatlands Branch. In his current role for SNH as Principal Adviser on Science and Biodiversity, Des is the strategic and operational lead for science and evidence, managing the policy, research and advisory work on biodiversity and wider applications of science, such as climate change adaptation.

A strong proponent of the importance of basing conservation practice on sound scientific principles, he has published over 200 papers, articles and books, especially in relation to upland and bird ecology in which he has earned international recognition and respect. He has been involved in almost every aspect of upland conservation throughout the British Isles over the past 30 years including as founder chairman of the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme. His books, many of them published collaboratively, include *Ecological Change in the Uplands* (1988); *Heaths and Moorland – cultural landscapes* (1995); *Birds of Prey in a Changing Environment* (2003); *An Illustrated Guide to British Upland Vegetation* (2004); *The Nature of the Cairngorms: Diversity in a changing environment* (2006), *Scotland's Birds of Prey* (2010) and *The Changing Nature of Scotland* (2011). His co-edited book *Nature's Conscience: the life and legacy of Derek Ratcliffe* (2015) was short-listed for British Birds-BTO Best Bird Book of 2015 as well as being included in *The Spectator's* and *New Statesman's* books of the year.

Over the past 30 years Des has strongly influenced nature conservation policy, initially for the UK through the NCC and Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC), and in recent years for Scotland through his work for SNH. He regularly provides advice to Ministers and civil servants in the Scottish Government, which undoubtedly influences the political approach taken to nature conservation issues. His work demonstrates both breadth and depth in his ecological expertise and contribution to our field. A scientist first and foremost, his primary research interests are in upland and Arctic-alpine ecosystem health, conservation and dynamics and on the value of nature.

At an international level he was, in 2014, elected Chairman of the Technical Advisory Group advising the United Nations Convention of Migratory Species work programme on the Conservation of Migratory Birds of Prey in Africa and Eurasia. He was an Expert Panel member of the IUCN UK Commission of Inquiry on Peatlands in 2010-11 and has been appointed to this role again this year. He has extensively presented at conferences both in the UK and internationally.

Described by his peers as an excellent communicator, a brilliant scientist and a committed advocate for our profession, Des gives generously of his time to others. He chaired the Watson Raptor Science Prize Panel from 2011-18 and has been a member of the Scottish Environment Web Board since 2011 – an initiative that was one of the 'Top Five' EU Life Projects in 2016. He is an associate editor for the *Journal of Applied Ecology* and an Editorial Board member for the 'Ecology, Biodiversity and Conservation' series published by Cambridge University Press.

Since 2006 he has been a trustee of the Field Studies Council, the UK's leading provider of outdoor environmental education, and was elected Chair in 2014. In 2015, he was elected a Fellow of the prestigious Royal Society of Edinburgh. In the same year he was made a Senior Research Fellow at Hatfield College, University of Durham. He has been an Honorary Professor of the University of the Highlands and Islands since 2013 and a Visiting Professor at Manchester Metropolitan University since 2018.

He also gives generously of his time as a Fellow of CIEEM, writing articles for *In Practice* and chairing, with gentle authority and wisdom, numerous professional conduct boards.

Through his work throughout his career, Des Thompson has become a highly influential ecologist who has made an outstanding and life-long contribution to ecology and environmental conservation at both national and international levels. Always respectful of, and giving prominence to, the contributions of the inspiring nature conservation champions who have gone before us, it is fitting today to acknowledge that Des is himself recognised as one of the most eminent, hugely respected and influential nature conservationists of our time and is an undoubtedly worthy recipient of the 2019 CIEEM Medal.

Max Wade CEcol CEnv FCIEEM, President
