



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 3, 2010

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Note: Members of the press are invited to attend the medal presentation at the Academy's Annual Meeting, 6 p.m., May 25. Scott Weidensaul will give a talk about the 400-year history of birding in Philadelphia and America.

ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES HONORS PA NATURALIST FOR EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATING SCIENCE TO PUBLIC

PHILADELPHIA—The Academy of Natural Sciences today announced the awarding of a prestigious honor to a Schuylkill County naturalist and prolific author for his outstanding contributions to making the science of nature and the physical world more accessible to the general public.

[Scott Weidensaul](#), 51, of Schuylkill Haven, will receive the Richard Hopper Day Memorial Medal for his lifelong contributions to interpreting and communicating natural science and discoveries for the general public. He will receive the medal at a ceremony Tuesday, May 25. The program is open to Academy members only.

"It's one thing for scientists to discover new species, publish scientific papers, and present research to colleagues at scientific conferences," said Dr. Ted Daeschler, acting Academy president and CEO. "But it is important that this new knowledge be conveyed to non-scientists in a non-technical way that reaches everyone. Scott is a master of this and is especially passionate about ornithology, one of the traditional research strengths of the Academy."

The Richard Hopper Day Memorial Medal was established in 1960 in memory of Day (1847–1924), a life member of the Academy, in recognition of his keen interest in natural history. Previous recipients include Sylvia Earle (2004), Thomas Lovejoy (2000), David Attenborough (1983), the Academy's [Dr. Ruth Patrick](#) (1969), and LS.B. Leakey (1964).

"I'm honored to be included in the kind of august company that the other Day Medal winners represent—people like Louis Leakey, David Attenborough and Stephen Ambrose, who were heroes of mine," said Weidensaul.

Appalachian landscape influenced life of prolific author

Growing up in the heart of the central Appalachians of eastern Pennsylvania was a great inspiration to Scott Weidensaul (WHY den saw). He began his writing career in 1978 with a weekly

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natural history column in a Schuylkill County newspaper, eventually moving to general and investigative reporting. He left in 1988 to become a freelance writer specializing in nature and wildlife. His work has appeared in many general-interest publications including Smithsonian, The New York Times, Nature Conservancy, National Wildlife, Audubon, The Philadelphia Inquirer and Harrisburg Patriot-News.

He has written more than two dozen books on natural history, including *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*, a 1999 Pulitzer Prize finalist for general nonfiction. His most recent book, *Of a Feather: A Brief History of American Birding*, traces 400 years of bird study and birding in America.

“Philadelphia—especially the Academy of Natural Sciences—was the cradle of American ornithology,” said Weidensaul. “From Bartram and Wilson to Audubon, Cassin and other giants, Philadelphia and the Academy set the template for bird study throughout the country.”

In addition to writing and lecturing about wildlife, Weidensaul is an active field researcher. Over the last 14 years, he has helped run an all-volunteer research team—from schoolchildren to retirees—to monitor migrating owls through the Appalachians. In years past he has participated in banding hawks for research purposes, and he recently joined a continental effort to understand the rapid evolution by several species of western hummingbirds of a new migratory route and wintering range in the eastern U.S.

His mantra is: “Anyone with a passion and interest can help do cutting-edge science.”

The first Richard Hopper Day Medal was presented April 26, 1960 to a team of four men who organized and made the dive in Jacques Picard's bathyscaphe “Trieste” to the deepest spot on the ocean's floor, Marianas Trench, southwest of Guam.

The Academy of Natural Sciences, founded in 1812, is the oldest natural science research institution and museum in the Americas and a world leader in biodiversity and environmental research. The mission of the Academy is the encouragement and cultivation of the sciences.

An image of Scott Weidensaul can be downloaded at: www.ansp.org/press/photos/news.php

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HOURS: Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. ADMISSION: \$12 adults; \$10 children 3-12, seniors, college students, and military personnel; free for members and children under 3. \$2 fee for Butterflies!