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Nature honours outstanding Canadian mentors

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Canadian biologists John Smol and Chris Wood will be honoured today in the 2010 *Nature* Awards for Mentoring in Science (Canada). The Awards will be presented by Dr Philip Campbell, Editor-in-Chief of Nature, at the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies annual meeting in Toronto.

John Smol, Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (FRSC), receives this year's mid-career award. Smol is a professor in the Department of Biology at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, where he is also holder of the Canada Research Chair in Environmental Change.

The 2010 lifetime achievement award goes to Chris Wood, FRSC, a professor in the Department of Biology at McMaster University (Hamilton, Ontario) and Canada Research Chair in Environment and Health.

Smol and Wood will each receive a prize of C$10,000 at the ceremony. Launched in 2005, the annual Nature Awards for Mentoring in Science recognize outstanding scientific mentorship and focus on a specific country or countries each year. 2010 focuses on Canada and more than 50 nominations were submitted for the two awards. The panel of judges for the 2010 Awards was led by John Hepburn, Vice President, Research and International, at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

"I am delighted that we can reward such strong mentors as John Smol and Chris Wood," comments Philip Campbell. "The task of mentoring is increasingly at risk under today's pressures, and we at Nature are keen to do whatever we can to help sustain the nurturing of young scientists."

John Smol is one of Canada's most renowned researchers in climate change, acid rain, Arctic environments and lake management, but always makes time to talk and laugh with his students. John Hepburn said during judging that the most striking statistic in Smol's nomination package was his success rate: "He has never failed with a grad student -- never. He has had 62 grad students, and none have withdrawn or failed. That's mentoring."

"I am honoured and thrilled to receive this award," says Smol. "It is especially precious to me as it was driven by my former students and other colleagues, who remain my close friends. I always seem puzzled when past students say I inspire them, as in fact I have always gotten my inspiration from my students."

Chris Wood's expertise lies in fish physiology, aquatic toxicology, and environmental regulations; his work on fish responses to pollution including acid rain and climate change has impacted public policy in Canada. Wood has attracted nearly a hundred post docs and grad students to his lab; about 40% now hold faculty positions. In addition, he has mentored more than 220 undergraduates and summer students. The judges were won over by the passionate sincerity of the testimonials provided by Wood's former students.

"I am deeply honoured and humbled by this award, says Wood. "I have been blessed with superb grad students and Post-Doctoral Fellows (PDFs) throughout my career, and a university (McMaster) and funding system (NSERC) that is highly supportive of research training. I am especially proud that a strong, multi-generational collaborative research network has grown up among the trainees whom I have mentored."

Wood is donating a substantial portion of his award to Bamfield Marine Sciences Centre, British Columbia where he works with his students and PDFs most summers.

More information about the Nature Awards for Mentoring in Science is available at **www.nature.com/nature/awards/mentorship/**.

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-More information-

High quality headshots of Smol, Wood and Campbell available Photos of the award ceremony will be available from 8 November

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About Professor Smol: http://post.queensu.ca/~smolj/dper/dperjps.html

About Professor Wood: http://www.biology.mcmaster.ca/faculty/wood/wood.htm

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