

Bob Blaxley – Great Gray Owl Award Winner 2015

Like great gray owls, AWA's great gray owl award winners work wisely and quietly to conserve wilderness habitat and wild creatures. AWA's successes reflect their enduring commitments to your conservation organization and our goals. The award is presented annually to those who meet the highest standards of volunteerism, dedication, and commitment. AWA awarded this honour to Bob Blaxley last fall. Bob is quite simply an icon for the Whaleback. He studied the Whaleback as a Master's student in the University of Calgary's Faculty of Environmental Design. His passion for the Whaleback's rare montane landscape didn't stop when he completed that degree. Instead, it led him to write *The Whaleback: A Walking Guide*, a marvelous introduction to the special features found there. Every year Bob leads two, if not more, groups into that enchanted landscape. As the *Advocate's* editor knows first hand those excursions are a treasure trove of information and insights. There you'll walk among the ancients, the



limber pines, that stand like sentinels along Little Whaleback Ridge. You'll learn why the western sides of exposed Douglas firs are so much smoother than their eastern sides. And, you'll learn something of the history of activism when Bob stops to point out where AMOCO Petroleum proposed to drill an exploratory well in 1994. Government refused – a very rare victory that may only have been secured because, in Bob's words, the Whaleback is “a sacred place.”

AWA and our members have been blessed by Bob's passion, knowledge, and commitment to the Whaleback and Alberta's other wild spaces.

Previous winners of the Great Gray Owl Award include: Anne Fabris, Margaret Main, Linda Javeri, Ed Hergott, Paul Sutherland, Nuno Fragoso, and Heather Crone.