

Awards and Citations

Acceptance of the 2023 Paleontological Society Strimple Award by Brian Hebert

Brian Hebert*

Joggins, Nova Scotia

I would like to thank the Paleontological Society for awarding me the Harrell L. Strimple award for 2023. This is one of the greatest honors of my life.

I would also like to thank all those who nominated me, wrote letters of support, and those who have helped me along the way. Science doesn't happen alone.

I was born next to the Joggins fossil cliffs along the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia, Canada. I found my first fossil as a young boy with my dad. That instant I was hooked. I would spend 12 hours per day walking those cliffs. I would pack a lunch and some snacks. I would occasionally meet others interested in fossils.

When I was 12 years old, there were two things that were important to me: baseball and fossils. It's also the year I met my first geologist. His name is Dr. John Calder. Without his help and guidance, I wouldn't be talking to you today.

John would bring geologists and paleontologists to our home. Having scientists come to your front door and ask your parents if they could speak to their son about fossils was not a common thing in our area. I was very excited when they drove into the yard. I would rush to get a box that I had put under my bed of the fossils that I thought were the best and most rare. I would unwrap them from the newspaper that my grandmother and grandfather had left over after they had read them. My whole family has always been very supportive and I owe them more than they will ever know.

From an early age I thought I should find every known fossil from the site. I thought that's what everyone does. If I found every fossil that had been found at the site, then if I saw something different there was a good chance it was something new. I've been very lucky to be able to give fossil tours of the Joggins fossil cliffs since I was a young boy.

I'm frequently asked how one can get started in paleontology and how one can excel at it. My answer is that paleontology is something anyone can do if they put in the time and have the patience. A good set of eyes that can recognize detail and a good memory are things that can help speed up the process. Most of the time people don't have the patience. The more time you put into this amazing science, the more it will reward you more than you could ever imagine.

I'd also like to thank those who made it possible for me to join my first field trips as a young man. It was always funny talking to professionals and graduate students about fossils and



having them ask me where I was doing my graduate studies and having to tell them I was in grade nine. It was a very welcoming environment and I was very lucky to be able to attend them and learn so much

Those early field trips made me realize how many different ways there are to share information and they allowed me through the years to talk about paleontology to everyone from beginners

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to experts and to be able to tailor that information to whatever group I'm communicating with.

This is also the time I started taking school groups from Nova Scotia and throughout the Maritimes. This continues today, from pre-school to graduate students I'm very lucky to talk to a wide range of people and share a subject that I love so much. I am currently in collaboration with Carleton University, Saint Mary's University, Nova Scotia Museum, and the New Brunswick Museum.

There are two people that I need to thank from the bottom of my heart. First is my 9-year-old daughter. Sadie is the most precious thing in the world. She loves going with me on the beach and she asks really good questions. It means so

much to me that she loves natural history so much. Her curiosity has no bounds and I can't wait to see the woman she grows up to be.

Lastly is the love of my life, Laura. I can't thank her enough for the love that she shows me every day. From those first days 25 years ago when you planned a trip to blue beach because you thought I would love it. It really made me fall more in love with you because of your kindness. I love that you don't get too mad about me randomly pulling off the highway when I see something that catches my eye.

Again, I would like to thank the Paleontological Society for this award. I couldn't be more honored and I hope I am able to contribute even more in my next chapter. Thank you.