Wellman Paleontology Prize

This prize is awarded biennially in recognition of recent discovery of important fossil material within New Zealand.

Harold Wellman (1909-1999) was a scientist unrivalled in the remarkable contribution he made to our understanding of New Zealand earth science. He had a varied and colourful early career as a gold miner, surveyor and geophysical survey assistant. In 1937 he joined New Zealand Geological Survey's coal resources survey in Greymouth, which began his most productive period of research. His intense geological debates with colleagues at the bar of the Albion Hotel in Greymouth are now legendary.

Harold is best known for his recognition of the Alpine Fault, but his major contributions to advancing New Zealand earth science are many. They included establishment of the New Zealand Fossil Record File, recognition of major displacements of rock in Northland, development of biostratigraphic stages for subdividing the New Zealand marine Cretaceous based on field observations and collections of fossil inoceramids.

In the mid-1950s Harold had a short stint with British Petroleum in Gisborne before taking a position in the Geology Department at Victoria University of Wellington in 1958, an attachment he maintained even after his retirement in 1974. Harold's international reputation in pioneering structural and tectonic geology was highlighted in a 1992 BBC Horizon documentary on him, titled "The Man that moved the Mountains."

Harold and his wife Joan provided the funds to establish the Wellman Prize for an important fossil find, because Harold felt that the role of paleontology in geology was losing its former significance. He fully understood the great value of paleontology in unravelling New Zealand’s complex geology. The need to systematically incorporate fossil data into his field mapping on the West Coast, led Harold to establish the New Zealand Fossil Record File. This was truly visionary and this unique repository remains the envy of the global paleontological community. In establishing the Wellman Prize, the rules are deliberately minimalistic with the only conditions being that the fossil discovery must be recorded in the NZ Fossil Record File and that an account of the discovery is to be written for the GSNZ newsletter.

Prior to the establishment of this prize, in 1986 the Geological Society of New Zealand made a Special Award to Dr Joan Wiffen CBE in recognition of her ground-breaking discoveries of fossil dinosaurs in Mangahouanga Stream, northern Hawke’s Bay. Although lacking formal training, Joan and her team of amateur paleontologists made remarkable fossil discoveries that included the remains of dinosaurs, pterosaurs, marine reptiles and turtles between 1975 and 1999. Joan was subsequently awarded an honorary DSc by Massey University in 1994 and the Morris Skinner Award from the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology in 2004.

*Rules relevant to applications and eligibility for this award are included as an appendix to this form. Please read these before completing the application.*

**Section 1: Details of fossil discoverer/applicant**

Name and title of finder:

Address:

Email:

Date of find:

If this application is being made by someone other than the fossil finder, please also provide the details of the applicant/nominator

Name and title of applicant (if different to above):

Address:

Email:

**Section 2: Fossil record file declaration**

Has the fossil been recorded in the New Zealand Fossil Record File? YES ☐

Please enter the Fossil Record Number here

**Section 3: Summary of the fossil find and its significance**

*Enter a statement outlining the fossil find and explaining its significance. The text box will expand as the text is typed. Please limit the summary to no more than 1 A4 page, excluding any images. These instructions may be deleted.*

**Section 4: Declaration**

*I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge, the information contained within this application is true and accurate.* YES☐

*Once completed, please send your application form to the current Chair of the Awards subcommittee (*[VP@gsnz.org.nz](mailto:VP@gsnz.org.nz)) *by the due date advertised in the Call for Awards for the year in which the nomination is being made.*

**Appendix**

**Rules relevant to applications and eligibility for the Wellman Paleontology Prize**

As contained within the GSNZ Bylaws pertaining to THE GEOSCIENCE SOCIETY OF NEW ZEALAND AWARDS TRUST (full version available via the [GSNZ website](http://gsnz.org.nz/)).

*1. To acknowledge the contribution made to geology by the discoverer(s) of important fossils found within New Zealand, the Society has established a prize award initially funded by private endowment.*

*2. The award shall be known as the Wellman Paleontology Prize ("the Prize"), in recognition of this outstanding discoverer of New Zealand fossils and his appreciation of the important role of fossil evidence in the resolution of New Zealand geology.*

*3. The Wellman Paleontology Prize shall be awarded by recommendation of the Awards Subcommittee and ratified by vote of the GSNZ National Committee. Advice may be sought from suitably-experienced paleontologists or from the Paleontology Special Interest Group convenor (and if required an ad hoc committee convened for the purpose).*

*4. The Prize shall be available to award biennially in recognition of a recent discovery of important fossil material within New Zealand; to qualify for the award, the fossil discovery must have been recorded in the New Zealand Fossil Record File, and its collection must be consistent with the Society’s Code of Ethics on Collection, Storage and Use of Fossils in Aotearoa.*

*5. The Prize shall include an inscribed certificate, but apart from the strictures implicit in paragraphs 1 to 4, the nature of the Prize, its value, the frequency with which it is awarded and the process of selecting the prize winner shall remain deliberately unspecified in keeping with the express wishes of the benefactor(s) and the spirit with which this prize has been established.*

*6. Notwithstanding Clause 5 (above), the Committee of the Society shall from time to time determine the value of the award.*

*7. The Prize shall, if possible, be announced and presented at a General Meeting, or Annual Conference, of the Society.*

*8. An account of each rewarded fossil discovery and its significance shall be written for the Society Newsletter by the nominator*

This page may be deleted on completion of the application