



CREATING ART THROUGH LIGHT AND LANDSCAPE



Our outdoor lighting designs, inspired by your unique landscape features, offer a beautiful and diverse selection of lighting solutions that range from the practical to the extraordinary. With over 15 years in business, trust us to install only the best and most efficient LED lighting products available.



Your **Best Choice** for professional lighting and installation

519-827-4634
 info@moonlightdesigns.ca 
 www.moonlightdesigns.ca



A bird in the hand

Retired teacher's passion for bird banding shapes scientific knowledge and planning

BY BARBARA AGGERHOLM
 PHOTOGRAPHY • DEAN PALMER

Sitting in his pickup truck on the side of a country road, David Lamble holds a small bird in one hand while tightening a tiny aluminum band around its leg with the other hand.

Within seconds, he releases the bird and the snow bunting flits and dips across the frozen field like a snowflake in the wind.

Every winter day, Lamble, a master bird bander, is here on this long, concession road east of Arthur.

At 8 a.m., he sets up his ground traps in a farmer's field, spreads corn inside and waits in a chilly black pickup truck for hungry snow buntings to enter the welded wire traps through small entryways.

Occasionally, a vehicle passes him on the windswept road and a farmer, snow plow operator or coyote hunter waves at the tall man in yellow-brown coveralls. If a curious driver stops, Lamble is happy to explain his work and share his knowledge of birds. He shows them his black binder where he keeps meticulous records of the birds' health, age, sex, band numbers and dates.



After trapping the snow buntings in cages, David Lamble places the birds in bags he has made, pulls the drawstrings and heads back to his truck.

If they're lucky, he'll help them band a bird themselves, always with bare hands to ensure the bird's safety. He'll push aside the feathers on its skull to see the pattern of bits of cartilage – white dots – that reveal the bird's age.

The sensation of holding a wild, winged creature never gets old.

"When you get to hold a bird and let it go, you'll never be quite the same," Lamble says. "You touch something that is totally foreign to you, and it's not aggressive and it sits there in absolute trust. You feel its heart beat and softness; softer than mink."

He was overwhelmed to see a Vincent Van Gogh painting during a visit to the Louvre in France, he says. But even Van Gogh's "Starry Night" can't compare with the birds. "You cannot capture the beauty and majesty of the birds that I band."

Lamble is one of only 300 master permit holders in Canada. During the winter, he

"When you get to hold a bird and let it go, you'll never be quite the same."

DAVID LAMBLE



banded snow buntings, a small, delicate-looking bird that burrows in snowbanks until it leaves here around April to nest in Greenland. He's not paid and he spends about six hours a day doing the job.

It's his passion.

"He has probably banded more snow buntings than anyone in the world. He was my guru," says Chris Earley, a master bird bander, interpretive biologist and education co-ordinator at the Arboretum at University of Guelph.

"He's so dedicated. I've banded snow buntings with him and it's crazy cold, and he's out all the time," Earley says. "We sit in his truck and there's no heat on because birds overheat."

Throughout the year – 200 days in total – Lamble moves to different locations to band other species, including osprey and northern saw-whet owls.

Last year, he banded 7,836 birds of

80 species. The total was lower than previous years because he was honoured to be invited to visit Kazakhstan, located in central Asia and Eastern Europe, in September as one of five Canadian bird banders in an international group marking the country's 50th anniversary of bird banding.

In recognition of his scientific work with birds, Grand River Conservation Authority presented him with the 2016 Honour Roll Award, its top conservation award.

"We're always learning from him," says Robert Messier, an ecologist with Grand River Conservation Authority. "Very few people achieve the master bander level and all the different facets appeal to Dave."

Lamble's accurate record-keeping and research showing trends over the past few decades help the authority make land management and other decisions, Messier says.

Additional wetland habitats have been created thanks to information gained from his banding of water fowl at Luther Marsh. He volunteers to identify numbers and bird species shot by hunters on opening day of duck hunting, and he shares the data with GRCA, Canadian Wildlife Services and universities.

Lamble, a retired high school teacher, is a natural instructor and it's a pleasure to watch him reach even the most reluctant learner during a school outing, Messier says.

"For someone who has banded about a quarter million birds, when the bird is in his hands, it's like pure joy," he says. "Then he spots those kids and he shows them how to hold that little bird and he can totally change that kid's attitude."

Lamble remembers when he was assigned to teach a Grade 9 class of challenging students. One day, a broad-shouldered male student who towered over Lamble's six-foot, one-inch frame stopped him. "He said: 'In Grade 3 you did bird banding in class and I want to know what happened to my bird.'" Lamble talked to him about his research.

"He said 'OK' and I never had any trouble that year," Lamble says. If the class wasn't paying attention, the student "would clear his

throat and everybody would settle down."

Since he began more than three decades ago, Lamble has banded about 200,000 birds of 200 species. That includes 17 ospreys last year, which he banded while working with a hydro crew and a bucket truck that lifts him to the nest platforms on top of utility poles.

His conservation efforts extend to turtles too. He initiated a new project at Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area in which he and staff members will establish artificial nesting mounds for turtles and put temporary nest guards over them to protect the eggs from predators.

"He's a man in motion," Messier says. "He's constantly doing stuff."

Lamble's talents don't end there. The Fergus resident is an easygoing man with a memory for facts and an affable manner that have made him a popular host of Rogers TV Bingo for more than two decades. The game supports Lions Club projects and charities. Lamble spices up the game with trivia. "B-3," he calls out. "Did you know the average brain is three pounds?"

"If I make a mistake, the phones light up," he says with a smile.

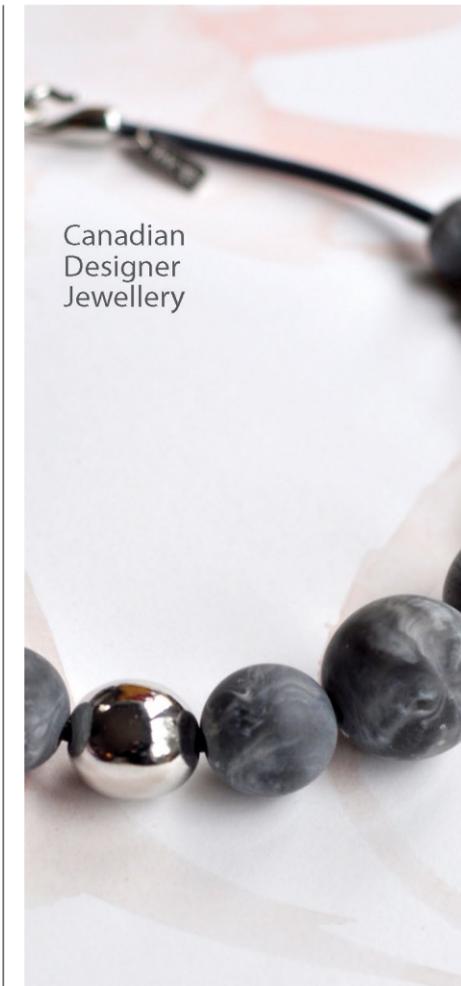
He's a talented singer who performs at seniors' homes, weddings, Robbie Burns' Day dinners, musical theatre and other venues. He has a passion for history and collects ancient Roman coins; little bronze coins that would pay for a family's meal in another time.

"I like the idea that I can hold something in my hand that someone held 2,000 years ago."

Lamble majored in both chemistry and history at Western University, then University of Western Ontario in London, his hometown, before becoming a teacher. He loves an inquisitive mind.

"We had a rule in class," he says. "The only stupid question is unasked. My trick was to take whatever they were interested in and put it in a subject."

Lamble, a fit-looking 70-year-old, and Lois, his wife of 35 years, raised four



Canadian Designer Jewellery



PRETTY CHIC
boutique

#prettychicguelph

Downtown Guelph
34 Quebec St.
519-780-2800
prettychic.ca



Birds sit quietly in David Lamble's hand as he chooses the size of band he needs and, using special pliers that he made, opens the band with its unique number and places it around the bird's leg. He gently squeezes the band with the pliers and rotates it to make sure it fits. He also inspects the birds and determines their age.



“A man has no value at all unless he improves the world he’s in. I can’t stop ISIS or getting Trump elected, but I can make this little part of the world that I live in better.”

children, now adults. Lois, a generous, creative woman who made his costumes for musical performances and kept his bird-banding records on weekend outings, died in 2015 after an illness.

“I used to band at the end of the road in a field and I’d get up before dawn and set up nets, and she would bake tea biscuits and bring them and we’d talk in the truck or car.”

In Lamble’s house, there’s a noisy cat named Jasmine and a 100-gallon fish tank with tetras and barbs that he once bred and sold. There are bird feeders in the big backyard where he will set up a fine mesh net between poles to catch and band

chickadees and other birds. A farmer’s field stretches behind his house.

“Chickadees have a Napoleon complex,” he says. “The irony is if you go to the backyard and sit there with seed in your hand, a chickadee will fly and get the seed and fly away. Get them in a net and they’re little tigers.”

The safety of the birds is paramount.

On this day, while snacking on muffins that he baked to take on bird-banding trips with a Thermos of tea, he shows the small cloth bags that he sewed himself to hold the birds after he takes them from the traps and carries them to his truck.

“I double sew the seams so at no time is

there a chance of a bird getting caught with its feet,” he says.

It wouldn’t have occurred to him when he was a teenager that he would be an expert among experts one day. Growing up with little money – his father never recovered from shrapnel wounds he received in the war – Lamble remembers being bullied in elementary and high school. Though he was plenty smart enough to skip grades twice, a high school principal once told him he couldn’t join classes in Latin or music because he was “too stupid.”

The bullying ended when a growth spurt

put Lamble at six feet and 160 pounds at the same time as he entered a new school in his senior years. After he became a teacher, he took vocal lessons from a private tutor and won lead roles in musical theatre in Guelph, Cambridge and Kitchener. He encouraged his students to explore their interests.

Lamble thought of those childhood experiences after he met innovative bird banders in Kazakhstan who were particularly interested in his snow bunting research.

“I do all my banding alone,” he says. “Everything I’ve learned I’ve learned on my own. I go there (Kazakhstan), and I



ARVANITIS & ASSOCIATES

DENTISTRY BY DESIGN



Excellence in Aesthetic & Implant Dentistry

George Arvanitis, D.D.S.
Dental Surgeon



Attention Denture Wearers & Those About to Lose their Teeth!

Dr. Arvanitis has developed a Revolutionary New Technique for Teeth in a Day

Imagine having all your teeth replaced with an implant supported non-removable bridge in one appointment! What’s Revolutionary?

The **Procedure**, the **Time** it takes and the **Price**.

If you have lost all your teeth or are about to, then Dr. Arvanitis wants to help you eat and smile with confidence, with the best implant treatment at an unbelievable price!

Call now to book your free consultation!

519-748-2282

55 Bridgeport Road East, Waterloo, Ontario

Smile Now Pay Later... Ask Us How with the Arvanitis Dental Credit Card

Hours: Monday and Tuesday 8 am - 8 pm
Wednesday and Thursday 8 am - 6 pm • Friday 8 am - 3:30 pm

www.kw-implants.com



No matter what happens, we’ll make it happen.

519 763 4600
www.guelphcarstar.com



find out that what I am doing is exactly what they're doing.

"My skills are every bit as good as their skills."

Lamble grew to love the outdoors when he was a boy hunting with his father. There was one problem: he didn't like to kill an animal.

"I found I really, really liked hunting. It was a great outdoor experience. But I couldn't abide killing. I could never tell my dad. I would miss. He couldn't understand why I missed."

Lamble started banding birds in 1978 after he and his first wife divorced and he needed a focus. He visited a friend who was a master bird bander and decided that's what he wanted to do. He apprenticed with his friend for a year before working with another master bander for another year.

When he had proven himself, he received a sub-permit. It meant that he was registered in Ottawa as someone who can band

the same species of birds as the master.

In 1986, he applied for and received his master bird banding permit. He was restricted then to banding passerines, or perching birds, but could also band hawks and owls, a tricky business. Then he qualified to band ducks and shore birds.

"I now band any bird in North America except hummingbirds," he says. "I don't want to handle them. I have big hands. I'm nervous about it."

"But I did band a lovely Merlin (a small species of falcon) on January 1 and they're nasty," he says. "She clawed me up really well and she got in a bite."

Today, he oversees five people who have sub-permits and work on their own. The youngest is a University of Guelph student from Iqaluit, territorial capital of Nunavut.

He only bands when the weather means it can be done safely for the birds. Different species mean different traps and nets. He

doesn't band in the rain. "The water leaks under their feathers. They could get sick and die of a chill." He uses a plastic-like spray inside the cage so the birds don't stick to it in the cold and he checks traps for most species every 30 minutes or less.

On this wintry day, there's no danger of rain and the temperature hovers around minus 5 C. Lamble watches snow buntings fly around his traps and leaves the truck when a dozen or so are inside each one.

"On a really good day, there might be 35 to 40 in each," he says. "It's too nice today; no wind and there are other food sources."

Getting to his knees, he reaches into the cage. The confused birds haven't been able to find their way out again, though the opening is there. He places them in the bags he made, pulls the drawstrings and heads back to the truck where he hangs the

bags from the rear-view mirror. There's only a bit of chirping coming from the bags.

Lamble settles into the driver's seat and retrieves a bird. It's quiet in his hand as he supports its head between two fingers and cups its body in his palm. Gently, he fans out a wing to check the colouration. "This is a female and she was born in 2016," he says.

He chooses the size of band he needs and, using special pliers that he made, opens the band with its unique number and places it around the bird's leg. He gently squeezes the band with the pliers and rotates it to make sure it fits.

He measures a wing and blows on its wishbone to check its fat score, shown as a bit of yellow through the skin.

"This bird has jammed her crop with corn and then they go somewhere safe to digest the food," he says. The fat score is important. "Some birds lose half their body weight on a cold winter day."

Then the bird goes headfirst into a short tube on top of a small weigh scale.

He works quickly. "With a snow bunting, I can take the bird out, measure, record and band in 30 seconds."

When he's finished, he passes the bird out the window. It pauses for a second on his open hand. "Good bye, Charlie. Let's go," he says and the snow bunting flies off.

If the bird had already been banded, he writes down the number and takes the measurements. He may even recognize his own band on a bird's leg. "I have the numbers in my head," he says.

"I record the data and it goes to Ottawa and eventually to Washington where computers have all the data I put in."

Records will show who banded the bird, when it hatched and when and where it was caught.

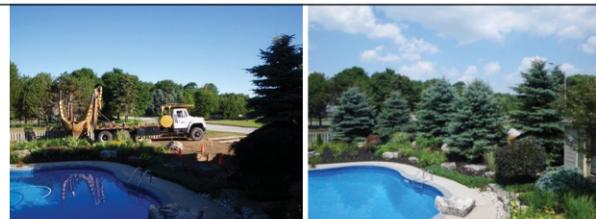
"We can find out how long it lived and where it went and that is important,"

Lamble says. "For example, the Eastern bluebird is benefiting from nest boxes. The population is growing significantly in expanded territories."

"This bird," he says, pointing to his records, "was banded by a sub-permit holder and it moved 57 kilometres from the banding location. That's interesting because generally speaking, the belief is that bluebirds move only two to three kilometres from the habitat site."

In 1990, he banded a ruby-crowned kinglet that was found later in California. "That's never happened before," he says. "No kinglet has ever been found to move that far due west."

Lamble plans to band birds as long as he can. "A man has no value at all unless he improves the world he's in," he says. "I can't stop ISIS or getting Trump elected, but I can make this little part of the world that I live in better." 



NATURAL...

JUST FASTER!

Fast Forest provides **fast and efficient mature tree planting and transplanting** services throughout Southern Ontario. Why wait 20 years for a tree to grow, when you can have instant shade, privacy and wind protection!

Plus, you can select directly from a wide range of tree species and sizes at our 62 acre tree nursery OR relocate trees that already exist on site. Adding trees always increases the value and curb appeal of your home.



Contact Fast Forest for more information on how our professional tree planting and transplanting services can benefit you.

270 Shoemaker Street, Kitchener, ON N2E 3E1
Phone: 519.748.6610 Email: info@fastforest.com

RESIDENTIAL . COMMERCIAL . INDUSTRIAL . INSTITUTIONAL . RECREATIONAL

CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE: WWW.FASTFOREST.CA



Exclusive Design for
not just
FOR THE GARDEN

not just
FOR THE GARDEN

WE ARE BACK!!!
Contemporary Home Styling
Residential & Commercial
Seasonal Planters
Custom Floral Designs
With Modern Botanicals
Innovative Designs
From Around The
Globe For Your Home

New Location! 295 Weber St. N. Waterloo | 519.571.0000 | www.notjustforthegarden.ca

Gray jay an easy choice for national bird – for some

BY BARBARA AGGERHOLM

To meet a gray jay is to appreciate a gray jay. But if you've never seen one, does a gray jay really deserve to be Canada's national bird?

Yes, say local bird experts Ryan Norris and Chris Earley, who have had close contact with gray jays.

"You can't get a tougher bird or smarter bird or friendlier bird. It's kind of got those attributes we think we have as Canadians," says University of Guelph biologist Norris, who researches gray jays in Algonquin Park.

No, says David Lamble, a master bird bander from Fergus who has had close encounters with about 200,000 birds of 200 species, but never a gray jay.

"If I chose a bird, it would be one everyone in Canada could see," Lamble says. A chickadee, for example. A snow bunting, or how about a barn swallow?

We don't see gray jays around here because the bird lives year-round in the Canadian boreal forest, part of a vast zone stretching from Yukon and northern British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador. Most of its range is in Canada. In Algonquin Park, the bird is at the southern edge of its range in eastern Canada.

Unfortunately Lamble hasn't seen a gray jay in Algonquin Park either. "For some reason, they don't seem to like me," he says with a smile.

Late last year, Canadian Geographic, magazine of the Royal Canadian Geographic Society, declared the gray jay the winner of a contest to name a national bird for Canada's 150th birthday this year. The bird is also known as whiskey jack,



Gray Jay, Algonquin Park
PHOTOGRAPHY • CHRIS EARLEY

Canada jay and *Perisoreus canadensis*.

The magazine sought advice from ornithologists, conservationists and Indigenous peoples. It held a spirited debate and invited the public to vote.

The gray jay is Canadian Geographic's recommendation only; the federal government has yet to agree.

If it had been a popularity contest, the common loon would have won, but the loon already gets its fair share of attention, including the fact that it's Ontario's provincial bird. But most loons "abandon" Canada each winter, Canadian Geographic says in its December issue.

The gray jay was in the running with the common loon, snowy owl, Canada goose, black-capped chickadee and raven during public voting, the magazine says, adding

that some wags suggested a beaver on a hang glider would be the best choice.

A strong point in its favour is that whiskey jack is a version of the Cree "Wisakedjak" and other variations in the Algonquin language family, the magazine says, and it's often portrayed as a "benevolent trickster of the forest" in First Nations stories.

Canadian Geographic admits that many Canadians, particularly city dwellers, have never seen a gray jay. So what makes it so special?

"Gray jays are super-cool," says Earley, interpretive biologist and education coordinator at the Arboretum at University of Guelph. "How can a place as wild as Canada not have a national bird?"

Earley voted for the gray jay. "For one thing, they are really friendly. They have no qualms about coming up to land on you to take seeds or steal your lunch. . . . They interact with you on their own terms," says Earley, who leads more than 100 people on naturalist weekends in Algonquin Park.

"One of the hikes we do is in gray jay territory and gray jays come up and visit us," Earley says. "It's amazing to watch people who have never seen a gray jay. To have a wild bird actually land on your hand is a feeling like nothing else and you can't help but smile.

"It's like a gift from nature when something like that happens."

The gray jay has too many stellar qualities to ignore, says Norris, associate professor and university research chair in the integrative biology department at University of Guelph.

"To me, the gray jay has all the attributes you want in a national bird including the fact it's no one's provincial bird. That aside,

the gray jay wins," Norris says.

Norris has researched the gray jay in Algonquin Park for years with Dan Strickland, former chief naturalist of Algonquin Park.

The gray jay stays year-round in Canada and relies on cached food to survive. They cache berries, fungi, insects, carcass meat and other foods with a sticky saliva in nooks and crannies of trees during summer and fall.

They remember where they've stored tens of thousands of food items in a territory 140 hectares in size, Norris says.

The birds are more visible during the fall and winter than summer. "They tend to come to people and look for food when there's less fresh food." But it depends on its individual personality and aggressiveness; some are bold, others are shy.

The caches are crucial because female gray jays start breeding in mid-February when it's usually minus 15 C and there's little food around, Norris says.

Whether or not the gray jay becomes our official national bird, Lamble, Norris and Earley agree that if the debate makes us think about birds and our impact on Canadian habitats, it might lead us to make better decisions about the environment.

The number of gray jays is declining in Algonquin Park, Norris says.

"We think that the warmer fall temperatures are spoiling cache food and reducing the quality of food over the winter," he says.

"We are breaking their refrigerator in our actions of warming the planet," Norris says. "Everything we do every day has long-term implications on climate.

"If it gets people thinking about all the possible effects of climate change on wildlife or the boreal forest in the winter, all the better." ☺

Buy Quality Furniture

Sell Your Excess Furniture

Not Enough Furniture?

New quality furniture and decor items arrive daily to help complete those empty rooms.
Save 15% - call for more information

Marge & Rita

Too Much Furniture?

Consign your excess furniture with us to earn 55% commission. We have buyers looking for high end furniture.
Delivery available - call for more information

Solving furniture problems for 35 years. Call or visit today and let us help you.

Bits & Pieces
Furniture & Décor Consignment Store

408 Gage Avenue (at Westmount), Kitchener
519-742-4033 BitsandPiecesFurniture
info@bits-and-pieces.ca | www.bits-and-pieces.ca

Visit the Region's LARGEST Fence & Deck Showroom

BFD
BUILDING CENTRE
THE FENCE & DECK EXPERTS
an independent RONA affiliate

5 Forwell Rd. at Victoria St. N.
(One block past Lackner)
519-745-3250
www.bfdrona.com

Quality Professional Installation
OR
Cash & Carry Materials

- BOOK A - FREE ESTIMATE