

# International Oak Society Awards 2006

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Every three years the International Oak Society holds an International Oak Conference. Since the year 1997, awards have been given at each Conference to members who uniquely contribute to the Society or to the promotion of oaks. Recipients of these awards were selected by the board after being nominated by the membership. In 2006, five members were chosen to receive an International Oak Society award.

There are two categories of awards:

1. **Lifetime Service Award:** this award is given to members who over a lifetime have contributed outstanding support to the Oak Society, or to the global study of oaks. A gift of Life Membership accompanies this award.
2. **Special Service Award:** this award is given to members who contributed particular services to the Oak Society or the promotion of oaks.

## 2006 Lifetime Service Award

The 2006 *Lifetime Service Award* belongs to two well known members from Turkey: **Nihat Gökyiğit** and **Hayrettin Karaca**, longtime members of the IOS. Both shared a tremendous accomplishment when they founded TEMA, the Turkish foundation combating soil erosion and forest destruction. With some 250,000 members worldwide, TEMA plays an important role in Turkish environmental protection. The planting of trees, including millions of oak seedlings, in eroded Anatolian landscapes is one of the many efforts TEMA undertakes daily. This ambitious project was started in 1998; within 25 years 10 billion acorns shall be planted in eroded soils! Nihat gave a short presentation of this project at the 5th International Oak Conference in 2000 in Asheville, North Carolina (Gökyiğit, 2000). Furthermore, both Nihat and Hayrettin are supporting scientists in their efforts to learn more about Turkish flora and fauna. Nihat founded the Nezehat Gökyigit Botanical Garden in busy Istanbul, with an emphasis to plant as many native Turkish plants as possible. Hayrettin founded the Karaca Arboretum in Yalova, on the other side of the Bosphorus, and assembled there a huge number of native and exotic plants from around the world. Interesting oaks are growing in both collections, of course.

## 2006 Special Service Award

The first *Special Service Award* was presented to **Christian Spinelli**, who with his wife Carin, founded the Finca Tori, a centre for education and forestation in Costa Rica. Both are busy educating the local population, and especially school kids, in environmental protection and forestation projects. Working with local groups, Christian manages to plant thousands of trees in deforested areas, including many native oaks which have been raised from seed in the affiliated nursery. Carin writes and draws stories for children. Even though their homeland is Costa Rica, they are establishing similar environmental projects in many other South American countries such as Chile and Argentina.

The second *Special Service Award* was given to **Richard Jensen**, professor of biology at Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana, U.S.A. Dick has served as our society's membership chair for many years, and is responsible for the membership directory. He created and currently maintains the society's web page. Both of these services, done completely voluntarily, are essential to the Oak Society and its members.

The third *Special Service Award* was presented to **Dan "The Oakman" Keiser**, from Minnesota, U.S.A. Dan is a certified arborist and a well known member of the Oak Society. When local authorities wanted to build a road through a sacred oak woodland, consisting of several old *Quercus macrocarpa*, Dan organized gatherings and brought hundreds of people together to protest against the project. These oaks were sacred trees to the Mendota Midewakanton Dakota, a Native American community. Unfortunately, the trees have been felled, but Dan saved scion wood and managed to establish grafts from the original trees. The Mendota Midewakanton Dakota Community made him an honorary member and gave him the name *Utuhu Tanka*, which means "Old Oak in the Forest."

The 2006 award winners illustrate the diverse interests and projects of Oak Society members and all they do for the sake of oak trees. Good luck and success for future endeavors to all the IOS members!

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