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05.09.2016

[Evolution pros, crusading scientist/writers, a climate change evangelist, and an artist are honored by NCSE](#) [3]

NCSE recognizes Donald Prothero, Katharine Hayhoe, Dana Nuccitelli, John Abraham, Andrew J. Petto, Paula Spence, and Skeptical Science for their tireless work defending and promoting science education.

In our modern, Internet-drenched world, misinformation travels at the speed of light. Whether in a webinar or IM'ing, in a Facebook debate or an online classroom, science education is unceasingly attacked, distorted, watered down, or just plain ignored.

This year's honorees have fought the good fight—often for years—confronting deniers not only on line but also in person, in print, on radio and TV, in hearings and press conferences. They've helped teachers to teach science well, informed the press, and often educated and entertained us at the same time.



Consider this year's recipients of NCSE's Friend of the Planet award. In her own words, Katharine Hayhoe is a "climate change evangelist," an über-communicator/atmospheric scientist who has demonstrated time and again that climate change science is entirely compatible with conservative and Christian values. "Katharine is a bridge builder between science and the wider society," notes NCSE executive director Ann Reid. "As director of Texas Tech's Climate Science Center, founder and CEO of ATMOS Research, author of over 100 climate-related papers and coauthor of the widely praised *A Climate for Change*, collaborator on the TV documentary *Years of Living Dangerously*, and a

contributor to a dozen other efforts, Hayhoe has guided people around cultural barriers and toward greater acceptance of climate science, and their personal need to act." (Photograph credit: Ashley Rodgers.)



Or consider the dynamic duo of Dana Nuccitelli and John Abraham, who have written (and written) about climate change for a clutch of publications but most notably for the *Guardian*. John Abraham is a thermal scientist-cum-communicator who has been called by one colleague "boundly energetic, hugely optimistic, fearless, compassionate and fast moving." Abraham co-created the Climate Science Rapid Response Team, which connects reporters with scientifically correct sources; and also co-created the Climate Science Legal Defense Fund, which helps scientists fight legal attacks. As a leading voice on climate change, says Minnesota broadcaster (and climate science trainer) Don Shelby, Abraham "takes on the most powerful people...and defeats them. His power comes from facts and science."



Environmental scientist Dana Nuccitelli has written hundreds of posts for the *Guardian* and *Skeptical Science*, co-authored numerous scientific papers, and tackled climate change deniers head on in his book, *Climatology versus Pseudoscience: Exposing the Failed Predictions of Global Warming Skeptics*. "The book includes the best available short account of the history of climate science and describes climate change models and controversies in brief but incisive and well-illustrated detail," says the reviewer for *Choice*. "Nuccitelli's book is particularly valuable for its succinct treatment of key disputes without the heated rhetoric." Adds Ann Reid: "Dana has helped counter the effects of climate change deniers in communities around the world, making life much easier for science teachers everywhere."



SkepticalScience.com's mission statement is short and sweet: "Explaining climate change science & rebutting global warming misinformation". The site—created and maintained by John Cook—examines "many climate myths, exposes the techniques and fallacies used to distort the science and then puts them in their proper context by presenting the full picture." Cook has rallied a network of global volunteers to explain the latest climate research and answer some of the toughest questions about climate change. There's even a phone app that puts the site's massive database at your fingertips. And Cook doesn't charge a nickel. "Skeptical Science has changed the landscape of climate change education by providing everyone with scientifically sound yet imminently accessible rebuttals to all of the most persistent climate change myths," says Ann Reid. "NCSE particularly appreciates that your website gives teachers, most of whom have received little formal training in climate science, a one-stop-shop for all their climate change questions."



And what of 2016's Friends of Darwin?



First up is geologist Donald Prothero. Where to start? Teacher, activist, and scholar for nearly 40 years; “the best punctuated equilibrium researcher on the West Coast,” according to Stephen Jay Gould; author of 35 books, 300 papers on evolution, hundreds of book reviews; and a frequently featured guest in TV documentaries. Niles Eldredge (writing about one of Prothero's many books) enthused: "Prothero, an outstanding paleontologist and skilled communicator, has written the best up-to-date account of the history of life as revealed by the fossil record that I have ever had the pleasure to read." Prothero should have won the FOD award years ago. Sorry about that, Don. But better late than never!



The same might be said of physical anthropologist Andrew J. Petto. Petto was editor of *Reports of the RNCSE* and a member of NCSE's board of directors from 1995 through 2014! A pioneer in evolution literacy, he pushed evolution education standards in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, helped state education agencies refine standards, helped local school districts to improve how they presented evolution curricula, and more. "This award is long overdue," says Ann Reid. "Anj served NCSE so long and so well in both capacities that he amply deserves to be named a Friend of Darwin now! More than that, it honors all his work in the cause of science education through his teaching, his activism, and his scholarship."



Last but hardly least is illustrator Paula Spence. For nearly a decade, Spence has provided NCSE with all manner of artwork for posters, handouts, avatars, icons, web graphics, portraits, and more, usually on absurd last-minute deadlines. And what wonderfully wacky illustrations! (Check out her work as illustrator and/or animation art director for such shows as *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *The Marvelous Misadventures of Flapjack*, and *Regular Show*.) Through her illustrations for NCSE, Spence has entertained, enlightened, and educated thousands of people for the years. Says NCSE Director of Communications Robert Luhn, "Paula is a godsend. Unfailingly upbeat, totally dedicated to the cause, and a superb (and very funny) artist. She epitomizes the selfless can-do spirit of the Friend of Darwin and the Friend of the Planet awards."

MEDIA NOTE: For print-quality images of the Friend of Darwin award, the Friend of the Planet Award, and the winners, please contact luhn@ncse.com. [4]

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The National Center for Science Education (NCSE) is a not-for-profit membership organization that defends the integrity of science education against ideological interference. We work with teachers, parents, scientists, and concerned citizens at the local, state, and national levels to ensure that topics like evolution and climate change are taught accurately, honestly, and confidently.

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