

## **2008 Finton Outdoor Educator of the Year Award**

# **Andrew McCown**

The winner of the 2008 Finton Outdoor Educator of the Year Award is Andrew McCown of Echo Hill Outdoor School in Worton, Maryland. Andrew joined the staff of Echo Hill in 1977 and was named Associate Director in 1981. In 1979, he started the Echo Hill Outdoor School Explore Program which began as a series of overnight canoe trips on the Chester and Sassafras Rivers and soon expanded into five-day trips using the school's buy boat or skipjack.

In addition to being the Associate Director, Andy teaches an average of six Bay Studies classes each week. He also teaches Mystery Tour classes, Farm Ecology and a class called Search, Find and Investigate. During the summer, he spends an average of eight weeks leading children and adults as part of the Explore Program. In his "spare" time, he serves on the Board of Directors of the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, was a founding member of the Chester River Association, and performs with a group called "Chesapeake Scenes".

Pat Herold Nielson described the impact of Andy's teaching this way, "My children spent a week with Andy at outdoor school, and came home with more river lore than I had absorbed in a decade. Captain Andy had read them poems, sung them songs, shown them how a marsh works, taught them how to catch and cook crabs, gotten them up at dawn, marveled with them at the stars, and convinced them that the river is the place where a person can learn everything important about life. In our watershed, thousands of kids have learned these lessons from Andy."

Or as another person put it, "Watching Andrew McCown teach about the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed is like watching Meryl Streep act or Placido Domingo sing: it is witnessing something very close to perfection."