

2023 Women of Discovery

The WINGS Women of Discovery Awards were established in 2003 to recognize extraordinary women making significant contributions to world knowledge and science through exploration.



2023 LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD DR. DAWN J. WRIGHT, USA

Geospatial data scientist, geographer, oceanographer

Dr. Dawn J. Wright is a leader in the development of data science for the oceans, with research interests in geospatial data science; seafloor mapping, coastal/ocean informatics, and environmental education. She is Chief Scientist of the Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri), where she was appointed in 2011 after 17 years as a professor of geography and oceanography at Oregon State University.

Called “Deep Sea Dawn” for her many trips to the bottom of the ocean and over 20 oceanographic expeditions, she has carried out fieldwork in some of the planet’s most geologically active regions, including the East Pacific Rise, the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, the Juan de Fuca Ridge, the Tonga Trench, and volcanoes under the Japan Sea and the Indian Ocean. In 1991, she became the first female of African descent to dive to the ocean floor in the deep

submersible, [Alvin](#). In 2022, she became the first person of African descent to dive to [Challenger Deep](#), the deepest point on Earth, and successfully operate a portable side scan sonar at full-ocean depth. This was done in the deep submersible, [Limiting Factor](#), in collaboration with Victor Vescovo and his Caladan Oceanic team.

Dawn has authored or co-authored more than 180 articles and 13 books on marine GIS, hydrothermal activity and tectonics of mid-ocean ridges, and coastal/ocean informatics. She is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. Her recent advisory board service includes the Science Advisory Boards of NOAA, the EPA, the Ocean Discovery XPRIZE competition, the Science Advisory Council of Conservation International, the National Academy of Sciences Ocean Studies Board, the Science Advisory Board of COMPASS Science Communication, Inc., and the EO Wilson Biodiversity Foundation. She maintains an affiliated faculty appointment at Oregon State University.

Dawn holds an Individual Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Physical Geography and Marine Geology from the University of California, Santa Barbara, an M.S. in Oceanography from Texas A&M University, and a B.S. cum laude in Geology from Wheaton College (Illinois). Her many interests include road cycling, mountain biking, apricot green tea gummy bears, 18th-century pirates, her puppy [Riley](#), and SpongeBob SquarePants.



Extraordinary Women. Extreme Discoveries.

Contact:
Meredith Ayan, *Executive Director*
meredithayan@wingsworldquest.org

