

# Natural Landscapes

The Newsletter of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust

Volume 7, Number 2, Summer 2001

## Highland moose — with an Albertan past

By Emma Boardman

Moose (*Alces alces*), the largest member of the deer family, are indigenous to Nova Scotia. Their numbers, however, declined greatly after European contact. Small populations of indigenous moose still exist in pockets on the mainland.

What is currently the largest population of moose in Nova Scotia, in the Cape Breton Highlands, has grown entirely from Alberta moose that were introduced to the province in the late 1940s. The introduced moose are larger than the native species and also have slightly different horns.

The moose is a magnificent, impressive animal. An adult male can stand over two metres tall from the shoulders, weigh over 550 kilograms and grow a rack of antlers each spring which measure an average of 160 centimetres across and weigh an average of 20 kg.

Moose are solitary, silent animals, usually coming together only for the mating season in the fall.

The word 'moose' is thought to come from an Algonkian word meaning "eater of twigs", and this name provides an apt yet simple description of the animal's diet. Moose feed mainly on fresh young shrubs. Moose tend to browse for this new growth either under the protection of a mature forest or in clearings that are not too far from cover. They will not venture too

far away from forests, as they need protection from predators and, particularly, from heat stress.

Moose cannot sweat and are very



The largest population of moose in Nova Scotia is in the Cape Breton Highlands, and these animals' ancestors came to the province from Alberta in the 1940s. (Photo courtesy of the Nova Scotia Natural Resources Department)

sensitive to heat, and Nova Scotia is one of the southernmost, and therefore hottest, regions where moose live.

There are still many threats to the survival of Nova Scotian moose. Natural predators such as the black bear take young or weak calves. Another large threat to

moose comes from humans, mainly through habitat loss and change. Roads are built, preventing access to areas the animals would normally visit and inhibiting inter-breeding between the already small populations of moose.

Moose hunting in Nova Scotia is currently restricted to a short season in Cape Breton in the fall in which a maximum of 200 moose can be harvested. Licence holders are selected in a draw.

The mature forests that moose need are being clear-cut, taking away not only protection for the moose themselves, but also cover for the tender young hardwood shrubs that moose need to eat. Softwoods that are planted for harvesting are not sufficient for the moose's diet. Clear-cuts also increase the population of white-tailed deer, another threat because the deer carry a disease that can be fatal to moose. White-tailed deer may compete with moose for food.

Moose are just one example of a species that needs the type of mature forests that the Nature Trust works to conserve, in order to survive. As Tamaini Snaith\* puts it, "By saving forests for moose, you save other species as well."

*\*Special thanks to Ms. Snaith for her help with this article. Tamaini has recently finished her Master's degree in Environmental Studies, with thesis work in Moose and Habitat Conservation in Nova Scotia.*

### Upcoming Events

*Mon., Sept. 24*—Draw for Island Getaway raffle winners at the Nature Trust office. The top prize is a trip for two to Grand Manan Island, N.B., in the Bay of Fundy.

*Wed., Oct. 10*—Premiere public performance of McKinnon's Brook Suite by Symphony Nova Scotia at Strathspey Place in Mabou.

*Fri., Oct. 12*—Halifax performance of McKinnon's Brook Suite at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium.

*Sat., Oct. 20*—Fourth annual dinner and silent auction, featuring Robert Bateman, one of Canada's best-known artists and conservationists.

## Project Updates

### *Nature Trust and landowners work together to protect shorebird habitat in Minas Basin*

By Donald Sam

Coordinator

Bay of Fundy Shorebirds Project

The biologically rich Upper Bay of Fundy is the focus of an international effort to conserve key habitat of sandpipers and other migratory shorebirds. The Nova Scotia Nature Trust, in cooperation with conservation partners, is working with landowners in local communities to protect key habitat for shorebirds.

An estimated two million birds descend annually on the Upper Bay of Fundy from July through October, on route from Arctic nesting areas to wintering areas in Surinam and French Guiana, South America, an event that likely has occurred for thousands of years. During the peak of migration—late July to early August—massive shimmering clouds of birds undulate over the water as they fly en masse.

For most of the shorebirds, the Bay of Fundy is the final stopover before embarking on a four-day nonstop transoceanic flight. The upper Bay's enormous food supply is crucial to the success of birds' fall migration to South America.

The recently announced "Bay of Fundy Shorebird Project" is a three year interprovincial effort that will secure and protect internationally important habitat for shorebirds and other non-game birds. For the birds, the main attraction of the Upper Bay of Fundy is the mud shrimp (*Corophium volutator*) which thrives in the area's vast majestic mudflats. These tiny shrimp (about 0.5 millimetres long) provide the fuel that fattens up the birds prior to their long haul southward. The birds' preoccupation while in the Upper Bay is feeding. They feed whenever the tidal mudflats are uncovered—day or night!

However, in between low tides, the birds seek refuge on nearby shorelines. Rest becomes the priority when rising tidal waters submerge feeding flats.



Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*)

The birds tend to gather—or roost—on undisturbed areas of shore to conserve energy for their upcoming flight. In some instances over 30,000 birds huddle tightly together at a roosting area, appearing as a carpet of birds along the cobble shoreline. An ideal roost is one that is undisturbed, affords a 'bird's eye view' of the surrounding area (to spot potential predators), and is close to the feeding flats.

Over the next three years, the Nature Trust will meet with landowners in Nova Scotia to discuss ways they can assist migratory shorebirds.

For someone who owns land where shorebirds roost, the best thing he or she can do to assist the birds is to preserve precious roosting habitat. This may mean leaving the shoreline in its current state and consulting the Nature Trust before making any changes to the coastal area.

Other landowners in the area can assist shorebirds during their migration by leaving roosting and feeding birds undisturbed. Practices such as avoiding sections of beach used by the birds, keeping pets restrained and notifying visiting beach users of the presence of the birds are examples of how local landowners can pitch in.

Currently, two targeted areas in Nova Scotia are Evangeline Beach near Grand Pré, and Blue Beach just south of Avonport. Both sites currently attract huge numbers of roosting birds.

### **Coastal Plain**

#### **Stewards Project**

The third year of the Coastal Plain Stewards project is well under way.

We had a good turnout for four Coastal Plain guided walks in July and August at Swaines Road Bog and Ponhook, Gillfillan and Barrington lakes. Fourteen new volunteers were trained at plant monitoring workshops, bringing our grand total of active monitors to 58!

The purpose of our landowner contact program is to raise awareness about rare and endangered coastal plain plants that thrive on privately owned properties throughout southwestern Nova Scotia.

—By Meredith Flannery, Project Coordinator

#### **Forest Legacy Project**

The project focuses on contacting landowners of small, yet highly significant old growth forest sites, as well as completing landowner contact for the large remaining tracts of older forest from last year's project. We hope to increase awareness of the importance of these forests and encourage landowners to formally protect their properties. Since June, over 20 landowners of sites in Cape Breton have been contacted and initial site assessments have been completed for three owners considering property protection.

—By Toby Rowe, Project Coordinator

#### **Sight Point/MacKinnon's Brook Project**

Initially involving one interested landowner, the Sight Point/MacKinnon's Brook Project has evolved over the last three years and now includes about eight landowners at various stages of negotiation in the protection of their land. The protected area has the potential of encompassing 2,000 acres, making it the largest privately owned protected area in Nova Scotia. Located in the Mabou Highlands, the protected area will fill a significant gap in the provincial protected areas system, as well as ensure that the incredible scenery of the area goes relatively unchanged.

—By Sean LeMoine, Project Coordinator

## The Stewardship Endowment Fund

By Christine Donnelly-Moan

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust's interest in a property doesn't end with the signing over of the deed.

When the Nature Trust adopts a piece of land, it places it under a broad mantle of stewardship. This stewardship provides protection to the land, from things such as development or resource extraction, and conservation or restoration of delicate habitat.

Stewardship also provides public access to certain properties by maintaining or creating trail systems and providing educational workshops.

Of course, money is necessary to provide a commitment of extended stewardship. In order to ensure that the Nature Trust will always have the funds needed to provide the care for our growing collection of properties, we have created the Stewardship Endowment Fund.

The goal of this special endowment fund is to generate income by pooling different monetary donations. Donors who want to support a certain Nature Trust property can contribute to the fund, knowing with confidence that their gift will be used well. To this end, the Nature Trust has created a set of rules regulating how monies in the fund can be employed.

We look forward to continuing our work on Nature Trust properties when the Stewardship Endowment Fund is in place.

The fund will play an important role in our monitoring of properties, ensuring, for example, that visitors don't use ATVs or cut timber.

Specific examples of how the fund could help are:

—the Cleveland Property needs restoration work to change it back to a floodplain, from its longtime agricultural use;

—and the Yellowhead and Brothers Islands properties could use interpretive signage to help visitors better enjoy their stay.

## *The gift of planned giving*

By Christine Donnelly-Moan

Few people own natural areas such as rare habitats or scenic watersheds—places critical for the Nature Trust to preserve. Those natural areas that do remain face many threats from commercial and residential development and are daily becoming more precious.

If you think you may own conservable land, here are some ideas on how you may protect it in conjunction with the Nature Trust (even if you don't own such land, read on because maybe you can still help).

### **Outright Gift of Conservable Land**

One of the best legacies you can leave to Nova Scotia is a gift of conservable land. If you have land that you do not wish to pass on to heirs, or if you no longer want to be troubled with maintenance and property taxes or burdened by capital gains taxes (due either from you or your heirs) you may consider donating your land to the Nature Trust. If your land has conservation value, you can be assured that the Nature Trust will protect it for future generations.

### **Reserved Life Estate**

You may want to donate conservable land, but wish to retain the right for you and your family to continue to live on the property. This can easily be done with an agreement that transfers your land to the Nature Trust while allowing you and your family the right to remain on the property for your lifetime. Such an agreement may provide you with some income tax relief.

### **Donation by Bequest**

Perhaps you want to ensure that your conservable land will be protected forever, but are not yet ready to relinquish control. You might consider donating your land to the Nature Trust in your will. If this is the case, someone from the Trust can help you work out the details. The potential of tax relief could benefit your heirs and you have the option of changing your mind later.

### **Donation with an Easement**

An easement changes the deed to your land so that future owners have to honor

your wishes for conservation. You may put an easement on a section of your land such as a saltwater marsh, saving it forever from development. You can enjoy tax breaks for creating an easement and further tax benefits if you donate your land to the Nature Trust.

Not everyone owns land that is critical to preserve, however. Even if your assets don't include conservable land, you may still have the power to sway the balance from extinction to survival for some of Nova Scotia's treasured wild places and their inhabitants.

### **Other Outright Gifts**

An Outright Gift could be cash, appreciated securities, personal property (such as a piano we could sell for market value), appreciated real estate, or life insurance. Sometimes the taxes levied on appreciated assets can be high. However, if you give your personal property, real estate, or insurance policies to the Nature Trust, you can avoid paying capital gains taxes while helping the Nature Trust preserve Nova Scotia's best natural places.

### **Other Revocable Gifts**

Revocable Gifts can also be in the form of cash, securities, real estate or personal property. The gift would be planned through your will, retirement assets, bank accounts, or insurance plans. With a revocable gift, you can enjoy the use of your assets as long as you need them, transferring them to the Nature Trust after your lifetime. Since you can change your mind about the gift, flexibility is the key to this type of donation.

### **Donor Advised Fund**

You may want to contribute a large amount of cash or securities over time. In this case, a Donor Advised Fund may work for you. Not only would you be donating a significant amount to nature, you and your heirs may be eligible for income, capital gains, and estate tax benefits. Such a donation encourages family to become involved in advising the fund.



A private parcel of land within a provincial wilderness area in Annapolis and Kings counties near Cloud Lake, shown above, has been bought and protected by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. (Photo reprinted with permission from *The Halifax Herald Limited*)

## Nature Trust buys private land parcel to ensure wilderness area protection

By Ian MacDougall

In 1998, the Nova Scotia government designated 31 protected areas for the purpose of preserving the natural environment.

Unfortunately, there are many private land holdings within these areas where the owners may undertake an activity that potentially threatens the integrity of the environment. In the absence of regulations on the private land holdings, it is difficult to prohibit incompatible uses.

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust recognized that these circumstances applied to the Wilson Hill property at Cloud Lake, part of a provincial wilderness area in Annapolis and Kings counties. As such, the Nature Trust purchased the

property from the Bowater Mersey Paper Company in an effort to preserve the natural environment.

This transaction sets a precedent because it is the first time a non-government agency bought property within a wilderness area to ensure long-term protection.

“This is the first one that anyone has ever managed to acquire,” says Rosalind Penfound, executive director of land services for the Natural Resources Department. “This is what we hope is the beginning of more acquisitions in the future.”

The 80-hectare parcel of land is part of 10,842 hectares of wilderness set aside by the province three years ago.

(Within the province's 31 wilderness areas are 104 private land holdings totaling about 4,500 hectares.)

Provincial officials say the Cloud Lake protected area contains a relatively uncommon ecosystem type—the well-drained tolerant mixed forest hill—and several hectares of mature white pine that forms part of the old growth forest component of the area.

If the former owner had decided to engage in logging on the property, the old growth forest would be destroyed. In addition, logging on the site would require the construction of an access road that would fragment many of the ecosystems leading to the Wilson Hill property. Road construction often drives a wedge through many sensitive ecosystems and leads to further activities that often are detrimental to the natural environment.

The Nature Trust strongly values the protection of privately owned lands within protected areas, but purchasing properties is not always the most viable method to protect lands because of costs.

The acquisition of this parcel was possible in part through a generous donation from a donor who strongly supports the goals and objectives of the Nature Trust. Both parties

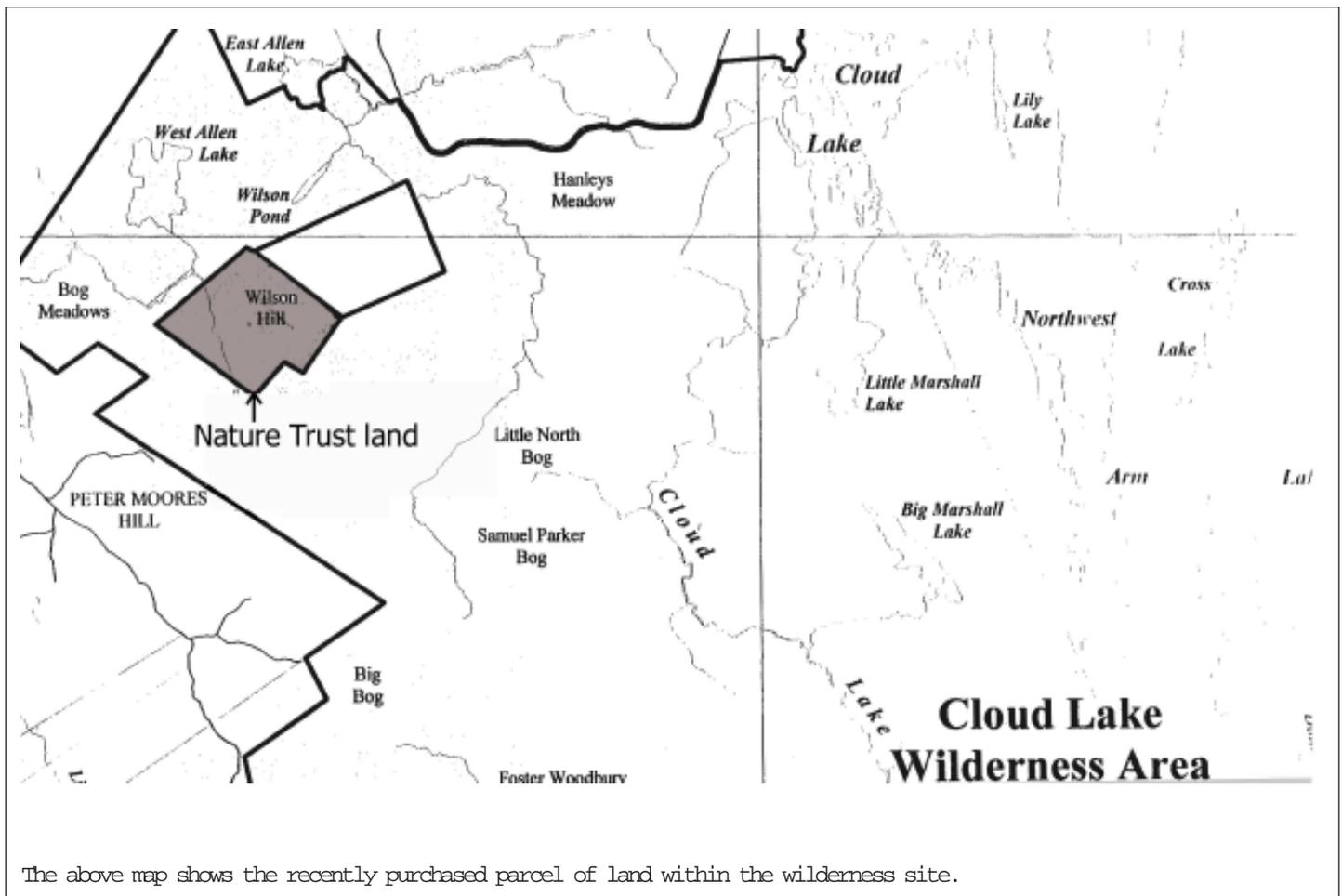
share similar concerns with respect to privately owned land holdings within protected areas.

In the absence of available funds to purchase land, the Department of Natural Resources provided assistance with site appraisal and helicopter access to the site. The Protected Areas Branch of the Department of Environment and Labour also supported the project. This support proved invaluable for the completion of the transaction.

The purchase of the Cloud Lake property occurred because of the willingness of a variety of groups—the non-government Nature Trust, private woodland owner Bowater Mersey and the provincial government—to work together toward a common goal of land conservation.

The Nature Trust will continue to pursue the protection of privately owned lands within protected areas, but this goal will require much needed support from a variety of sources.

The purchase of this parcel is a precedent that will encourage support and promote awareness of the importance of preserving private lands within protected areas.



## *Part of the story behind the McKinnon's Brook Suite*

The McKinnon's Brook Suite is music inspired by nature and history. The nature comes from breathtaking landscapes on the western side of Cape Breton, near Mabou. Here the mountains stretch out their fingers of stone, forests, meadows and soil until the land touches the sea. The history is of the Scottish settlements that formed along the shoreline and further inland. In particular, the music celebrates the lives of Hugh and Mary MacKinnon, immigrants from the Isle of Barra who first settled in the area.

The result is an orchestral work that uses traditional Gaelic instruments and melodies to tell a musical history of the land and its people.

The world premiere of the McKinnon's Brook Suite will be held Oct. 10 at Strathspey Place in Mabou as part of the Celtic Colours International Festival. Symphony Nova Scotia, conducted by composer Scott Macmillan and featuring soloists Ian McKinnon and David Greenberg, will perform.

Another concert will be held Oct. 12 at the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium in Halifax as part of the Symphony Nova Scotia's Mostly Maritime Pops series.

The music is, in part, a recognition of ongoing conservation work by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust in working with landowners to try and protect 2,000 acres (800 hectares) of land on the shores of the Mabou Highlands.

A partnership has been created between the Nature Trust and Ian McKinnon to support the creation of the McKinnon's Brook CD, world premiere performances and the Nature Trust's landmark conservation project. One dollar from every CD sold will be donated to the Nature Trust's Sight Point-MacKinnon's\* Brook Endowment Fund. (\*The place is spelled slightly differently than the suite.)

"About two decades ago I hiked into MacKinnon's Brook for the first time with a small group of family and friends," says Ian

McKinnon, well-known in the music industry for a 12-year career with the Celtic/rock group Rawlins Cross.

"I had my pipes with me and in honour of the occasion I stood on the high bluff overlooking the small cove where the brook flows into the ocean and played a lament in memory of our ancestors."

He continues: "The idea for this project was seeded on that day."

The list of potential collaborators, he said, began and ended with one name: Scott Macmillan. Over the past decade, Scott has built an international reputation for himself as a composer and arranger of works combining Celtic and classical elements including the landmark "Celtic Mass for the Sea" (with librettist, Jennyfer Brickenden).

"By happy coincidence the Nature Trust has been working to protect the very area that we are celebrating with this musical work," said Mr. McKinnon.

The Nature Trust would like to thank the project sponsors: Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Bristol Communications, Clearwater Fine Foods, Tourism Cape Breton, Sport and Recreation Commission of Nova Scotia, Charles and Mary MacLennan Foundation, Inverness County Recreation/Tourism Department, Keltic Lodge, Van Penick and Rod MacLennan.

### **Wilbur Walworth**

*The Nova Scotia Nature Trust has lost a strong supporter with the passing away of Wilbur Walworth.*

*Mr. Walworth, 83, died on April 20, 2001, at his home in Concord, Mass., following several months of confinement with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.*

*"He was strongly in favour of land conservation," says Vivian Walworth, his widow. "I think he grew up that way."*

*The Walworths own land in Cape Breton and are working with the Nature Trust and other area landowners to protect about 800 hectares of land on the coastal highlands as part of the MacKinnon's Brook project.*

## **Staffing News**

### **New Staff**

The Nature Trust welcomes four new staff members: Toby Rowe, Steve Harder, Peter Ross and Brenda Scott.

Toby brings a diverse environmental background to her role as coordinator for the Forest Legacy Project. She is an accomplished environmental educator, park interpreter, researcher and most recently served as the wetland stewardship coordinator for the BC Wetlands Society.

Steve has a degree in environmental studies and more than 20 years' experience in journalism and communications, which has been put to great use in re-establishing a newsletter team, conducting research, creating our latest fund-raising literature and

assisting with the conservation projects. He is with us for 26 weeks through the On-Site program.

Peter is another ex-media person, with years of journalism experience and more recently entrepreneurial experience with an Alberta magazine. He has been hired to help with development for the MacKinnon's Brook project.

Brenda is our new book-keeper, formerly a keen volunteer! She is helping us out part-time (and sometimes with little Gillian too), while completing a commerce degree with a major in accounting.

Welcome to all of you.

### **Continuing Staff**

Donald Sam, Karen Potter, Meredith

Flannery and Sean LeMoine continue their excellent work on our conservation and land securement projects. Bonnie Sutherland is back in the Executive Director's chair, with Sandy Creighton helping out part-time in the office.

### **Departing Staff**

We are all sad to have to say good-bye to Kim McGee-Holman as our book-keeper. She not only helped greatly in getting our books organized and systems in place, but she kept us all laughing! We recognize how hard it was balancing her work for us with her full-time job and other commitments and we appreciate her helping us out as long as she could. Thanks Kim!

## A big thanks

The Nature Trust would like to thank some of the people who have helped lighten the work load of staff during the past few months.

Some (but certainly not all) of those who have volunteered are: Emma Boardman, Christine Donnelly-Moan, Ian MacDougall and Jeanne Thomas (newsletter committee); Jeanne and George Hebb (helping with mailouts); April Johansen, Brian Mott, Ron Miller, Greg Lukeman (manning Halifax and Dartmouth markets for raffle sales); Greg (web page and other design work); all the directors, sponsors and numerous individuals (raffle sales); special thanks to Maggie Moss for her tireless work in organizing the annual dinner and auction, supported by Mike Coolen, Richard Nickerson, Joanne MacCormack, Greg and others; Victoria Steeves (who is regrettably leaving the Nova Scotia area), Kermit

deGooyer and George Alliston (property committee); Sean Cassidy (for a major overhaul of the database system); Jim Wolford, Merritt Gibson and Brenda Coldwell (for their work in the Annapolis Valley, helping with walks, bird counts, slide shows and bird reports); Linda Robinson at the Natural Resources Department Map Library for her help with maps; DNR and Environment Department staff for their assistance on the Cloud Lake project; all those who helped with the summer's coastal plain guided walks, including Dave MacKinnon from the Protected Areas Division of the Department of Environment and Labour, the Tusket River Environmental Protection Association and Lillian Perry and Patty Hudson, and the new coastal plain plant monitors: the Anthes family, Shirley Atwood, Rosalie Bourque, Alain Godbout, Ross Hall, Leif Helmer, Paul Murchison, Jill Naas, Catherine Pross, Laurie Roberts, Hazel Stos, June

Swift and Michael Warner; and Arnold and Peggy Meisner (for boat trips to help with habitat monitoring on Pohnhook Lake).

We'd also like to thank the various supporting foundations and organizations, which include Chawkers Foundation, Federal Habitat Stewardship Program, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Endangered Species Recovery Fund (a partnership between World Wildlife Fund Canada and the Canadian Wildlife Service), EcoAction, Nova Scotia Natural Resources—funding provided by Habitat Conservation Fund, George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation, Davis Conservation Foundation, Shell Environmental Fund, and key partners in the shorebirds project, which include the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada, U.S. Federal Government, U.S. Nature Conservancy and Canadian Wildlife Service.

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**Many thanks to the following supporters who have made donations and/or became members or renewed membership since December 2000. And thank you to all of our other members and donors, too!**

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### In Memoriam

Donations have been made in memory of

*Marilyn MacKinnon*  
*Gaby Porter*  
*Wilbur Walworth*



invites you to our

## *Fourth Annual Dinner & Silent Auction*

with

Celebrated Artist, Naturalist &  
Conservationist

**Robert Bateman**

Saturday, October 20, 6 p.m.  
Lord Nelson Hotel, Halifax

Tickets \$70

Tables of 10 available

Please contact the Nature Trust office (425-5263) to reserve tickets/tables early. We anticipate a sold out event!

*Be sure not to miss this exciting and entertaining evening with Robert Bateman, a devoted conservationist and gifted wildlife artist. His accomplishments include several books of artwork and philosophy and many speaking engagements. He has been the subject of several films and, of course, his artistic talent makes him a Canadian treasure.*

*This annual event brings together representatives from government, resource industries, environmental and conservation organizations, the research community, and the financial industry, as well as many interested citizens. This event provides critical funds for the Nature Trust's efforts to preserve outstanding and threatened natural areas throughout the province.*



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Natural Landscapes, the newsletter of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, is published periodically. It aims to keep members updated on Nature Trust projects, issues in private land conservation, and special events, and to provide a forum for readers to discuss relevant topics.

Natural Landscapes depends on the input of readers for content. All are invited to submit articles, notes, letters, commentaries, or important notices. Please send submissions on IBM compatible 3.5" diskettes or paper to:

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## **JOIN THE NOVA SCOTIA NATURE TRUST**

Membership in the Nova Scotia Nature Trust is open to any person or corporation interested in the protection of Nova Scotia's natural beauty and native biological diversity. Members receive the newsletter, *Natural Landscapes*, are entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting, and may participate in the various committees of the Trust. Members also have the satisfaction of knowing that they are making an important contribution to the protection of Nova Scotia's outstanding natural areas.

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expiry date \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to receive information on options for protecting my land

I would like more information on including the Nature Trust in my estate planning

I would like receive more information to pass along to friends

signature \_\_\_\_\_

Please make cheque or money order payable to: Nova Scotia Nature Trust, P.O. Box 2202, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3C4