



# THE BLUE HERON

The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

P.O. Box 158, Baddeck, Nova Scotia B0E 1B0

VOLUME 8

JANUARY 2006

NO. 1

With the mailing of this newsletter, The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society has published seventeen newsletters since 1997. Taken as a group, the compounding newsletter information to date represents a continuum of significant contributions focused on the stewardship of and activities concerning the Bras d'Or and its watershed.

By reviewing the Society's newsletters, an interested person can see the 'slow evolution' of progress that has definitely improved how we should 'think' about taking care of the Bras d'Or Lakes. There are always pressing issues to be dealt with. Progress may be slow and incremental, but persistence in pursuing our mandate ultimately pays off. (see Pat Bates's piece pg. 4)

In this issue of the Blue Heron, No. 17, we cover particular events in the NEWS ITEM column. The short pieces provide snap shots of activities

focusing on meetings, completed and potential projects and other activities. Some of the articles are extensions of the News Item column. Jim Morrow, publisher of the Victoria Standard, has allowed us to reprint two articles that have appeared recently in the Victoria Standard. Rod Bersford has provided an article on a research proposal regarding the MSX parasite that has received funding through the Bras d'Or Institute. James Crawford, a society board member, has provided his personal reflections on black duck hunting on the Bras d'Or. There is also the inclusion of second volume of the UINR Martin published by the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources located in Eskasoni. This is a new publication.

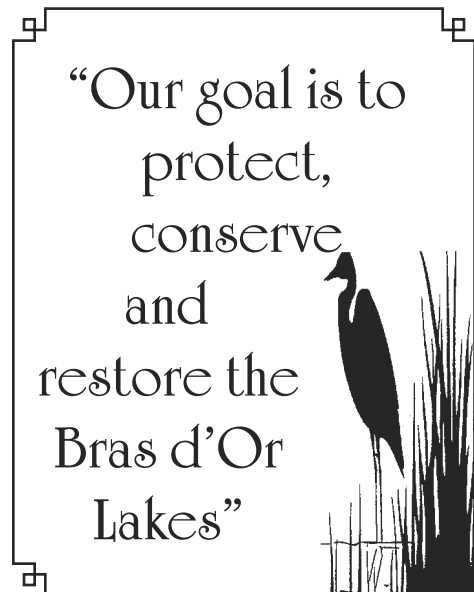
One issue the Society is interested in pursuing is a revisiting the inventory of subdivisions along the perimeter of the Bras d'Or Lakes. In 2001 the Society hired a student to list the number of subdivisions and total lots that had been sold or were for sale. Since 2001 several new subdivisions have been created to access developable waterfront lots. The Society is concerned about set back regulations, testing for septic systems and the availability of good quality drinking water. Over the past five years, real estate values have increased dramatically. This means that property assessments will increase, as will property taxes. The long-term ramifications of property development for recreational homes requires further study in terms of the cumulative affects on the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed.

**NOTICE**  
**THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY WILL BE HELD AT THE ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL MUSEUM ON SATURDAY, MARCH 18, 2006 AT 2:00 PM. ALL MEMBERS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND AS WELL AS INTERESTED CITIZENS WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH THE FUTURE STEWARDSHIP OF THE BRAS D'OR LAKES.**

Our hope is that you will enjoy this current newsletter and continue to support The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society.

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## NEWS ITEMS:

### **Semi-Annual Meeting**

On August 13, 2005 the semi-annual was held at the Baddeck Community Center. About twenty people attended this meeting. Pat Bates provided a summary of the Society's activities. John Hugh Edwards from the St. Francis Xavier University extension service facilitated the meeting discussions. Various topics were debated regarding voiced concerns about the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. Details of this meeting are discussed in Chairman Pat Bates's 'Letter to The Editor.'

### **2005 Membership Numbers**

It has been brought to the attention of Society board members that over the last two years our membership numbers have declined from over 200 to about 100 members. Concerns have been raised that without attracting a strong membership base, the Society is not reaching out to as large an audience required to build a strong 'constituency of advocates' supporting the conservation mandate of the Society to preserve, protect and restore the Bras d'Or Lakes and its surrounding watershed.

### **Shoreline Erosion**

Concerns have been raised about the erosion of shoreline due to wave action and strong winds. Photos were made available to the board showing serious incidences of shoreline erosion along particular locations. Big Harbor Island was one of the focal points. Recent unsettled weather and strong winds have caused damage that is difficult to repair and restore eroded shorefront.

### **Oyster Reseed Project**

The society-sponsored oyster reseed and enhancement project undertaken in the fall of 2004 continues to be monitored. This project undertook

to seed oysters in three locations in hopes of creating infected oysters. The MSX parasite destroyed the commercial oyster fishery in certain locations in the Bras d'Or Lakes. Observation has suggested that the reseeded oysters are doing well in The Boom area. Oysters located near the Little Narrows gypsum plant are still suffering from the MSX parasite infestation.

### **Bras d'Or Institute Study**

An article in this newsletter by Rod Bersford outlines a future study of the MSX parasite with regards to the decimation of the oyster shellfish stocks in the Bras d'Or Lakes. This research will hopefully provide information on the MXS parasite's role as a bioinvader. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has done extensive work on the subject where the MSX parasite infected the Chesapeake Bay oyster population many years ago.

### **Ross's Ferry Marine Park**

In September 2005, the opening of the Ross's Ferry Marine Park was held at the site of the old ferry wharf. This project was a \$250,000.00 plus project to rehabilitate the old ferry wharf for recreational boat use and make a small walking trail. The project was funded by Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation. Included in this newsletter is an article by Jim Morrow regarding this newly completed project.

### **Grand Narrows Marina Facility in Poor Repair**

It has been reported to and observed by Society members that the Grand Narrows Marina has been sadly neglected. This facility is located on the easterly side of Grand Narrows across from Iona. The pump out equipment was not functioning this past summer. The floating docks are in disrepair. This facility had a large sum of federal money invested in the rehabilitation of the abandoned ferry

dock, the pump out facility and a peat moss disposal bed. Accountability is required here.

### **First Nations Newsletter: UNIR Martin**

Included with this edition of The Blue Heron is the second volume of a new newsletter published by the Unima'ki Institute of Natural Resources. This publication is known as the UINR Martin. The publication is welcomed and provides information regarding First Nation's concerns for Bras d'Or Lakes. By including it with our newsletter, we hope that you will mark the website: [www.uinr.ca](http://www.uinr.ca) for future issues of The Martin.

### **Crowdis Mountain Lagoon Report**

A draft copy of a consultant's report regarding the monitoring of adverse environmental effects of dumping septic sludge has been submitted for review. This report assesses pollution of MacDonald's Brook, contamination of land adjacent to the now closed lagoon and sampling the sludge confined to the lagoon proper. Dr. Graham Fraser of St. Francis Xavier University will peer review the final draft.

### **New Boat Haul Out Facility**

In the fall of 2005, rumors spread in the community of Baddeck that a new boat storage and repair facility was being considered at the head of Baddeck Bay. The plan encompassed clearing four to five acres of wooded shorefront to construct a boat storage shed, haul out ramp and a wharf. Baddeck Bay Holdings, a Delaware registered company, owns the 94 acre property. The property fronts on Herring Cove, a favored fishing spot for mackerel. Domtar Corp. formerly owned this property. Baddeck Bay Holdings purchased it in 1988 from Domtar to preclude any proposed commercial development in 1988.

*Cont'd on page 3*

A few years ago plans were in place to build the Alexander Graham Bell Environmental Stewardship Center on a portion of the property. This project never moved ahead other than drilling for potable water. To date, there has been no consultation with adjacent landowners or the community of Baddeck as to the feasibility of the project or potential adverse environmental effects from potential commercial boat storage and service facility. Property owners have voiced concerns about the loss of value of their properties in the area, should this commercial development take place.

### **Birch Point Property To Be Designated a "Nature Reserve"**

A 175-acre property, known as the Birch Point property, located along the western shore of the Washabuck River estuary is to be designated a 'nature reserve' under current provincial legislation. This property has in place a 'forever-wild' conservation easement held by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. The former owner, Rudi Haase, conveyed the forever-wild conservation easement in 1996. This property has almost 3kms of shorefront, which is protected by the conservation easement from any future development. This is the first 'nature reserve' designation of any ecologically significant property in the Bras d'Or watershed.

### **UN Biosphere Reserve Designation**

On January 6, 2006, the steering committee pursuing the UN Biosphere Designation Reserve for the Bras d'Or Lakes met to review the progress made to date. Dr. James Foulds, professor at Cape Breton University, has been working diligently along with fellow committee members to determine the optimal strategy for working with communities to have the Bras d'Or Lakes receive the biosphere

designation. The process demands community consultation to build the required support and consensus to legitimize the application process for biosphere designation.

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## **Ross's Ferry Marine Park**

*By Jim Morrow*

The final report has been submitted to all of the funding partners for the Ross Ferry Marine Park.

At the recent Ross Ferry Stewardship Society Annual General Meeting, Chair, John Hugh Edwards, reported that, bit by bit, the key elements of the project came together. Victoria County, through the work of our councilor, and society member, Fraser Patterson, contributed the funds, which allowed us to draw down the federal contribution. After much struggle and frustration, we finally got agreement from the province on the design of the park, and from the Federal government in the form of environmental approval.

Work began on the wharf in late winter, and in the early spring the concrete for the boat ramp was poured. People could finally see some progress. Throughout the summer, work took place on various aspects of the project. As the work continued, it was a familiar sight to see young people and their parents tip-toeing their way through the mud and gravel and around heavy equipment to swim off the wharf. Boaters also navigated the hazards to use the new ramp. Even before it was completed, our park was being used by the community. It made the frustrations we had experienced worthwhile.

The project involved making renovations to the existing ferry dock, which had been out of service for over 40 years. The wharf was stabilized, rubbing strakes, boarding ladders, and berthing bollards were added.

The wharf has been resurfaced with gravel and sod, picnic tables and shelters have been added, and lighting has been installed.

The wharf is now equipped with a sewage pump out station connected to an approved holding tank.

A first class boat ramp has been built for small boat launching. A utility building

complete with washroom and shower has been built. Site infrastructure has been developed including a sewage holding tank, underground electrical service to the wharf and utility building, and a fresh water well.

Specific to the application to Nova Scotia Tourism Culture and Heritage the project completed: Constructing museum quality interpretative panels depicting the natural history of the Great Bras d'Or Channel, the flora and fauna of the Bras d'Or and adjacent land, and the history of human settlement in the surrounding area, including the history of the ferry service at Ross Ferry.

Establishing a series of picnic shelters, tables, and benches have been assembled and installed on the wharf, along the waterfront portion of the property, and around the walking trails a first class walking trail system has been developed. Work on the trails included clearing 7 foot wide paths through the property, building the trails to a width of 5 feet and depth coverage of 4 inches of class A gravel and 2 inches of crusher fines (as per instructions from NS Natural Resources personnel).

Landscaping upgrades throughout the park area including: placing armour stone along several hundred feet of waterfront, which includes rough stone steps providing access to the shoreline.

Mr. Edwards said, our foreman Myers MacKenzie and his workers Frankie MacLean, Jimmy MacDonald, and Shane Matheson (later replaced by John Lovell) worked hard to make the park presentable for the Grand Opening on Labor Day weekend. By all reports everyone enjoyed the opening day. It was great to offer the park as a gift from our community to itself. Since the opening, our crew has continued to work hard completing the work of park development. We, as members of the Stewardship Society, and as members of our community owe a debt of gratitude to Myers and his workers for a job very well done. Their commitment to the task at hand and to the development of this valuable community asset has been exemplary. For all of our collective toil, we now have a park of which we can be very proud.



## 2005 Summer Semi-Annual General Meeting

In each of the eight years since its incorporation, the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society has held two general meetings. One is the Annual General Meeting held late in March by requirement to satisfy an obligation as a corporation to table our annual report and meet the requirements of the law. The second meeting has generally been held near mid August with the objective of reporting to members of the Society who live away from Cape Breton but reside and vacation here during the spring and summer months.

In 2005, our semi-annual meeting was held on August 13<sup>th</sup> in Baddeck and was facilitated by a member of St. Francis Xavier University Extension Dept. Those in attendance were engaged in a discussion on current issues facing the Bras d'Or Lake and its Watershed and offered their views on the real and perceived risks to the Lake and its Watershed and some constructive suggestions on action that might be taken. I am pleased to quote directly from the report of that meeting.

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### ...Threats...

A number of threats to the health of the ecosystem were discussed including shoreline development problems such as clear cutting and scarification.

1. Erosion from shoreline residential and commercial development was also identified as a primary source of siltation, which is affecting fish stocks. Other effects of shoreline development are raising property costs and assessments, which limit access to the Bras d'Or for local people and increase the percentage of properties given over to recreational and non-

resident use.

2. Other issues identified by participants include ballast water discharge from ocean going vessels and the introduction of invasive species such as green crab and the MSX parasite.
3. The problem of sewage control and management was discussed from a number of perspectives. Stewardship Society members were concerned about the continuing effects of "straight pipe" sewage disposal from shoreline residences. Concern was also voiced about the treatment and management of bio-solids, which may find their way into the Bras d'Or.
4. One participant from the community of MacKinnon's Harbour spoke of the specific issue of maintaining the entrance to the harbour.
5. Participants also spoke about the broader context in which the health of the Bras d'Or must be placed. One person suggested that it appears the biological productivity of the ecosystem has been decreasing over time. Another participant felt that climate change is becoming a major factor affecting the health of the Bras d'Or.

#### Response to Threats

Stewardship Society members expressed frustration at the level and quality of responses that have been made to the threats facing the Bras d'Or.

Lack of funding for science monitoring and management was mentioned as a key issue. Unless we have comprehensive, timely information, it will be difficult to develop adequate response to the threats facing the ecosystem.

Monitoring and enforcement of sewage control and treatment regulations concerning residences, boats, and commercial operations was the topic of much discussion. Participants wondered why both residents and regulators talk of "grand fathering" outmoded and inadequate sewage

systems when there is no provision for the concept in law or regulation. One person also stated that Nova Scotia has one of the best Environment Acts in the country but it is not properly enforced.

It was further suggested that progress in addressing the health of the Bras d'Or was impeded by a state of public policy confusion related to the complex jurisdictional regime which includes several Federal and Provincial departments, four Municipal units, and five First Nations.

#### Improving the Response

Members of the Stewardship Society were not content to simply gripe about present conditions. They also made practical suggestions for improving our response to the threats facing the Bras d'Or.

A first step in a coherent response will be to provide funding for Bras d'Or based science, such as the State of the Bras d'Or report, which is currently being developed, with the leadership of the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources.

A further necessary requirement will be the monitoring and enforcement of existing regulations including those dealing with sewage control, management, and treatment. Connected to this issue was the need to develop more adequate emergency preparedness for potential environmental crisis.

Questions also arose at the meeting concerning the impact of riparian rights and aboriginal rights. Better public information and understanding of these concepts could well improve the relationship between neighbours and neighbouring communities in the watershed.

There was some discussion at the meeting about whether there are too many or too few groups attempting to address issues facing the Bras d'Or. While opinions were expressed on both sides of the issue, it was clear that all agreed there was a need for more communication, education,

*Cont'd on page 5*

and co-ordinated efforts between communities and groups. The present collaborative environmental planning initiative needs to be supported and strengthened, and it needs to involve more communities and organizations from around the watershed.

Another positive initiative mentioned at the meeting was the volunteer driven effort to have the Bras d'Or receive a Biosphere Reserve designation from UNESCO.

### The Role of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

As the brief discussion drew to a close, participants were asked to advise the Stewardship Society on what role it should play in the future of the Bras d'Or. Many participants felt that the Society should continue with the work it has been doing, including public policy advocacy and participation in innovative programs such as the collaborative environmental planning initiative.

It was also suggested that because the Society does not depend on government or corporate funding, it could provide "unencumbered" leadership in defining and advocating for priority issues. By building relationships and operating in a style that promotes mutual respect, the Society can provide real leadership and direction.

**Some felt that while the Society has made its mark, it should take a more public stance on issues and exert pressure on government to enforce environmental regulations.**

To strengthen its position as the representative of an authentic community viewpoint, the Society should put a priority on increasing membership from around the watershed, including First Nations' communities.

There is a lot of work to do and most participants felt that the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society is well placed to play a role in creating a healthy future for the Bras d'Or.

Considerable work is under way

on some of the issues raised by participants at the meeting. This includes work to conclude establishment of regulation to restrict dumping of sewage from pleasure craft into the Lake. Also underway are broad efforts to restrict dumping of ballast water into the lake from commercial shipping and work in collaboration with the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources to perform a comprehensive "State of the Bras d'Or Report."

### Comment

Progress, although slow and plodding, is being made toward the long term protection and restoration of the Bras d'Or Lake. But as usual, further investigation of its ecosystem and surrounding land use practices provide a better understanding of the risk to the lake and move us to a new sense of energy and commitment to ensure that, as Cape Bretoners, we refuse to permit serious damage to this, one of our great resources.

*Pat Bates, Chairman*



## Property Sense

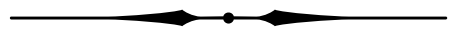
*By Sharon Carter*

Thinking of buying a property on the water or developing an existing property? Well, this is the article for you! Here are some tips to help you enhance your property while at the same time minimizing your impact on the environment.

- If a lane or driveway already exists into your lot, check the legal status of it and use it for your driveway if possible. If you are constructing a road, put in one that follows the general contours and moderate slopes of your lot. Doing so offers less obstruction to natural drainage and is easier to stabilize and maintain.
- Do you know if it is possible to

access a water supply on your lot? If the available water supply is low or of poor quality you may consider using a cistern. It is an above ground or below ground storage system that collects, stores and distributes run off rain or snow from roofs. This water should only be used for landscaping, toilet flushing, and laundry.

- Develop a site plan based on your long-term objectives and the suitability of the land for these uses.
- During construction, be sure to control erosion by using temporary methods such as diversions to carry water away from the construction site to where it can be safely dispersed. Using hay bales to trap sediments before they enter the water will help control erosion problems.
- Preserve the natural shoreline by taking a "do nothing" approach. Don't mow the grass to the edge or cut shrubs and trees from the shoreline. Don't remove gravel, rock or clear out "aquatic weeds" near your shore.
- Compost. Composting is good for the garden, improving plant and root growth while helping to put back what we take away from the soil. Composting helps build healthy soils in many ways such as helping to prevent erosion by absorbing and holding the water, this in turn makes the soil more resistant to erosion when there is a heavy rainfall.
- As much as possible, retain native species of plants on your lot. Native species require less maintenance, fertilizer and pesticides. Native plants and shrubs are also an excellent way to control runoff and prevent erosion.
- Conserve water. Plant native species, they are already adapted to local climate conditions and therefore require less water. Catch rainwater in barrels for use later in your garden or water flowers in your yard.



## **AquaNet funding awarded to local institutions to develop tools to study biological and environmental limitations of MSX infections**

*By Rod Beresford, Integrative Science  
Diane Ingraham, Physics and Engineering*

**T**he Bras d'Or oyster fishery has the potential to contribute to and revitalize many Cape Breton communities through the commercial fishery, the aquaculture industry, as well as the tourism industry. The oyster fishery of the Bras d'Or is also rooted in history and tradition for the First Nation communities that border the Lakes. Within the lakes, the oyster stocks contribute greatly to the overall habitat as natural and effective filters in the aquatic environment. The appearance of a parasite named MSX in the Bras d'Or in recent years has resulted in mass mortality of oysters and poses a serious threat to oyster populations and aquaculture in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick.

In December 2004, a group of organizations interested in working on the MSX oyster parasite problem in the Bras d'Or Lakes gathered together in Antigonish for an initial meeting. Individuals from Cape Breton University, the University of Prince Edward Island, the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources, Dalhousie University, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, and the National Research Council (the Institute for Marine Biosciences and Institute for Information Technology) attended the meeting. A few months later, at the Aquaculture Association of Nova Scotia meeting in Halifax, a smaller group of these individuals gathered together to discuss possible research ideas and funding opportunities. At this meeting, members were informed of potential funding available from AquaNet (one of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence). In March 2005, the team learned that their proposal was successful.

The relationship between oysters, this parasite and their environment is complex and needs to be better understood. This project brings together many different scientific disciplines to better understand

and manage this disease in this region. Knowledge of the effect of temperature on how MSX affects oysters coupled with knowledge of the natural environment will allow for the prediction of where and how the parasite can spread. A database of environmental factors of the lakes (temperature, salinity, flow) presented on web-based maps in real-time and easily accessible formats will allow harvesters and regulators to assess risks to oyster stocks with the changes of the seasons and over years.

This study will provide some important information as well as excellent tools to help to further study and control MSX disease, as well as provide excellent training and skills development for young scientists to become future experts for the emerging aquaculture industry. The Web-based maps will aid in tracking past outbreaks and the environmental conditions surrounding them and also provide models to predict potential MSX outbreaks. Information gained regarding temperature effects on the oyster-MSX relationship will benefit not only the local oyster industry, but also the Atlantic Canadian oyster industry valued at \$25M. Some fieldwork is complete and laboratory work is underway.

An investigators meeting took place at UPEI in November 2005 followed by two meetings at Cape Breton University that included science, government, community, and industry representatives. Both meetings were extremely successful and more meetings are planned in the near future to facilitate the creation of business and research plans to develop a healthier oyster industry on Cape Breton Island. The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society, through Pat Bates, provided a letter of support for this project and they have been invited and represented at the recent meetings. It is the intent of the research partners to ensure all interested parties are aware of the progress of this AquaNet funded project and are included in future proposals in some fashion. The support of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society is recognized and sincerely appreciated by everyone who is carrying out this research.

For more information on this AquaNet project and subsequent initiatives, please contact Rod Beresford, Department of Biology, Cape Breton University, P.O. Box 5300, Sydney, N.S. B1P 6L2 (Ph: 902-563-1609) (rod\_beresford@capebretonu.ca).

***The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society is interested in contributions from our members. If you have something to contribute to the Newsletter or would like to work with the society's board, please let us know. The society is an all volunteer organization that welcomes input from individuals interested in promoting the conservation, protection and restoration of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed.***



## Victoria County is Poised to Initiate A Residential Waste Water Pilot Project.

By Jim Morrow

The de-watering truck was to arrive in Nova Scotia on August 26th. Island Vacuum & Portables Ltd. in partnership with Altinex Envirotech and with co-operation from the Septic Pumpers Association of Nova Scotia (SPANS) will be using the Masko-Zoll mobile septic tank de-watering technology in a pilot project in Victoria County. Altinex is the Norwegian manufacturer of the sludge de-watering equipment.

Demonstrations will take place across Victoria County during the months of September and October, by appointment only.

Alan MacAskill of Island Vacuum & Portables Ltd. said he is hopeful residents will like and approve of the new technology. "De-watering and treatment of waste water is the direction I want to go," Mr. MacAskill said.

Transport and treatment of sludge is a considerable cost and an environmental challenge for municipalities and industry. The mobile de-watering system significantly reduces the hauling cost by removing water from the sludge at site. Clean water is returned to the septic tank. The increase in the sludge solids concentration reduces the amount of sludge to be transported and treated by over 80 percent and the de-watered sludge is well suited for composting or other treatment options.

The technology demonstrations coincide with the Municipality of the County of Victoria's Municipal Prepaid Septic Tank Pumping Pilot Project.

Victoria municipal council has taken a pro-active approach to addressing wastewater management issues in their community. By participating in the program, the County will investigate management options for all residential on-site septic systems by ensuring tanks are serviced on a routine schedule. The pilot project is cost-shared by the municipality and Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations (SNSMR) with technical

support from Nova Scotia Environment & Labour.

If fully implemented, the municipality expects to reduce demands for sewer infrastructure funds while ensuring environmentally sound septic management practices.

The Municipality, as of August 23rd, had 52 residents willing to take part in the pilot program. For details and directions please telephone (902) 578-1233 between 8:30 - 4:30, Monday to Friday and email: [islandvacuum@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:islandvacuum@ns.sympatico.ca) for more information.

Note: The above project was completed in December 2005. The technology i.e. the de-watering truck has been returned to its owners. It is hoped that the introduction of new and innovative ways to treat sewage sludge and its disposal will be high on the agenda of the Nova Scotia's Department of Environment and Labor. Funding should be set aside to support responsible waste management strategies employing innovative and safe technologies.

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### *With Dog and Gun*

(author unknown)

*(A poem passed down from  
Jim Crawford's grandfather,  
William Crawford Sr.)*

Out in the woods with a dog an' gun  
Is my idea of a real days fun.  
Taint the birds that I am out to kill,  
That furnishes me with finest thrill.  
Coz I never worry or fret a lot,  
Or curse my luck if I miss a shot;  
There's many a time, an' I don't know why,  
That I can shoot too low,  
or aim too high.  
An' all I can see is the distant whirr  
Of a bird that's gittin' back  
home to her-  
Yep, gittin' back home  
at the end o'day,  
An' I'm just as glad that he got away.



# **The Bras d'Or Stewardship Society**

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**Bras d'Or Watch**  
 to report any observed acts, incidents and  
 violations that threaten the integrity of  
 Bras d'Or Lakes please call:

**1 800 565 1633**

Our Email: [stewardship@baddeck.com](mailto:stewardship@baddeck.com)

**2006**

## **BRAS D'OR STEWARDSHIP SOCIETY**

MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$15.00		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, I am in favour of conserving and restoring the Bras d'Or Lake and watershed through responsible stewardship.
FAMILY	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$25.00		
CONTRIBUTOR	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$50.00		
SUPPORTER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$100.00	Name	
LIFETIME MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/>	\$500.00	Address	

*Mail check or money order along with your name  
and address to:*

**Bras d'Or Stewardship Society**  
**P.O. Box 158**  
**Baddeck, Nova Scotia, B0E 1B0**

Phone

e-mail

Fax



# A Personal Reflection

## **Break O'Day**

*By James Crawford*

Malagawatch in late December, with dawn yet to break, is indeed a magical spot. Leaving Orangedale in my boat at 5:30 in the morning, there was an inch of ice to cut through until we were east of Merton's Island. Black, as a well driller's ass in the Klondike, the next twenty minute steam was more by a sense of direction than by visible bearings. That's one thing about duck shooting on the Bras d'Or's; you are always ware of the moon's phase.

With my trusty old Chesapeake duck dog "Coot" and my son, William, both perched with their backs to the breeze, the old man held the tiller with the cold north wind cutting his face. Into The Boom, then downwind to Malagawatch, the marsh appears from the black of night. It seems as though it is always darkest just before dawn.

After 'setting out' the decoys and getting squared away in the blind, there always seems to be a sense of enduring tranquility. Into the southeast, dawn begins to break, my favorite time to be alive. Slowly sounds are heard. Black ducks love to talk during the graying of the dawn. You hear the loud highball, then the constant quacks. We have snuck into their grounds. Soon, very soon the 'Blacks' will be alighting into the set.

With burnt powder and spent shoot, 'Coot' is breaking ice along the shoreline into the open water for another retrieve. What a sight... Coot makes the shore with a big burly mid-winter red legger.

Those of us who hunt black ducks along their Atlantic flyway treasure a bag of late season blacks. Since my shooting time came after the season of the demise of the wild celery and flocks of canvasbacks, the king of ducks has always been the wiley old black duck. Done medium rare, there can only be no finer bird for the black duck hunter's table.

I think of the memories with dog and gun of those who have gone before me now. To be blessed with a simple appreciation of such moments, past and present, the smells, sounds and sights, that is why I rise before the break o'day.