

## **WILDLIFE CONSERVATION FUND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY 1998-99:**

Many of the Island's conservation groups joined forces to work towards the creation of a new conservation fund to support needed habitat conservation and improvement initiatives in Prince Edward Island. After many discussions with key Ministers and Departments, the legislature agreed and created the Wildlife Conservation Fund through a once a year contribution of \$13 required by anyone wishing to fish, hunt, or trap on the Island. One of the prerequisites to establishing the fund was that, for the first three years, \$60,000 annually would be dedicated to the Cardigan Hatchery Operation now being run by Atlantic Veterinary College. This fisher, hunter, and trapper contribution requirement came into force in 1998 and resulted in the creation of a fund of \$147,337. The license dispensers receive a 5% commission and this amounted to \$7,350.

The Minister of Technology and the Environment appointed a group of nine conservationists from throughout the province to develop the terms of reference and application forms for the new fund. This was done and the first call for applications was made. Applications were received in December from 18 groups. These were reviewed by the Wildlife Conservation Fund Committee. A number of applications were rejected because they requested funds for expenditures or work not covered by the fund. The following groups received 90% of the eligible grant funds with the balance to be paid on successful completion of their project. Southeast Environmental Committee (\$270), Indian River Watershed Committee (\$1,620), P.E.I. Trappers Association (\$648), Miminegash River System Enhancement Committee (\$1,107), Sir Andrew Macphail Foundation (\$3,907.80), Environmental Coalition of P.E.I. (\$3,446.80), P.E.I. Soil and Crop Association (\$4,500), and Mill Watershed Improvement Committee (\$4,500). The balance of \$59,967.40 was advanced to AVC. The successful projects ranged from fish habitat improvement to conservation education.

In 1999, there will be two rounds of applications and it is anticipated that there will be sufficient high quality applications to warrant the full expenditure of the fund. The second deadline for applications was May 1st, 1999 and the third round will be September 15, 1999. For additional information, contact Todd Dupuis, the Chairperson, by telephone or fax at 368-6082.

## **SEA DUCK KILL PERMIT ISSUED BY CWS**

In response to pressure from mussel growers, the Canadian Wildlife Service has issued a kill permit for six sea ducks (scoters, oldsquaws and eiders) daily at a large mussel growing site in Boughton River/Cardigan Bay. A Sea Duck/Mussel Aquaculture Working Group consists of representatives of the Canadian Wildlife Service, P.E.I. Department of Technology and Environment Planning and Administration, P.E.I. Fish and Wildlife Division, P.E.I. Fisheries and Aquaculture, and P.E.I. Mussel Growers Association. This issue of scaring verses killing sea ducks feeding on young "seed crop" cultivated mussels has been under discussion over the past few years at the Working Group. In the past, this group has recommended and assigned annual scare permits to mussel growers when problems arose. The Working Group has also been conducting education on methods that have worked elsewhere and some growers are experimenting with biodegradable sock netting that does not allow ducks to penetrate it to get at the mussel spat. However, some mussel growers wanted proof that scaring was as or more effective than shooting and the specialists indicated they could not offer proof from studies elsewhere in North America.

Thus, a project was designed to explore the issue. One large grower has allowed the Working Group to conduct surveys and research at three specific sites at one operation. One will be used as an observation area from a boat, one where the birds will be scared by a boat, and a third where six birds a day may be shot.

This group of birds has been of concern to the Natural History Society for some time due to declines reported by members at many of the best observation sites. The Canadian Wildlife Service and other conservation groups are working to reverse the declines in 12 of the 15 species in North America