

# Environmental Groups Meet

BY GARY SCHNEIDER

It is often hard to know where the dividing line is between an interest in natural history and concern for the environment. Sometimes it is very distinct - you can be an avid naturalist and not be worried about nuclear power plants. At other times, one interest goes hand in hand with the other. The recent concern over the damage to streams that feed into the West River by Maritime Construction Ltd. of Charlottetown was raised by naturalists, fishermen and environmentalists.

On May 8-11, Diane Griffin and Linda DeMone of the Island Nature Trust and I were in Ottawa at the 10th annual meeting of the Canadian Environmental Network, a coalition of groups across the country concerned with everything from the preservation of South Moresby to the contamination of groundwater in the Maritimes. About 140 people from all ten provinces and both territories came to gather and share information and to meet other people with the same interests

While we don't have to physically deal with sour gas from Alberta wells ruining our farms or the low-level flights in Labrador harming the caribou, but many of the issues raised concerned us on local as well as national levels. Some of the workshops were: Wildlife Management in Canada, Wildlife '87: Gaining Momentum, Conservation Strategies Across Canada, and Native Views of Conservation. There were meetings on the Environmental Protection Act, Computer Networking, Local Economy Trading Systems (LETS), Herbicide and Pesticide Use in Canada, and many more, far too many to attend them all. The CEN rented the facilities of a Katimavik camp in the Gatineau Hills, a relaxing atmosphere that made it possible to have informal meetings with workshop leaders and members in between meetings.

The keynote address, "The Role of the Citizen Scientist", jointly presented by Carleton University professor Heather Menzes and Nova Scotia writer Donna Smith was a wonderful combination of humour and seriousness, inspiring and entertaining at the same time. They stressed the need for information, but through experience have learned that ordinary people have large roles to play in making our environment fit for all kinds of life, and that the "experts" do not always have the answers.

Monday, May 11, brought meetings with NDP Environment Critic Bill Blaikie, Liberal Environment Critic Charles Caccia, and a 2½ hour question and answer period with Tom McMillan, Minister of the Environment. Mr. McMillan seemed very open although I don't know how he could be so relaxed facing that many people asking him for answers on a wide range of subjects. He was quite ready to say he didn't know about something and would reply to the questioner personally at a later date. He was quite well informed on most of the subjects and was commended by all for his hard work in trying to save South Moresby from being logged.

The Canadian Environmental Network is setting up a computer network across the country so that different groups will be able to communicate and share information more easily. A modem has been purchased for the computer at the Island Nature Trust office at Beaconsfield and several people are now in the process of learning how to use the system. I am the CEN's representative on the National Steering Committee (replacing Diane), and if you have any questions on the network or environmental issues that I can help with, please let me know. My address and phone number (evenings and weekends) are on page 2 of this newsletter.