

## Katherine Mehl partnering with people

Atlantic Canada's research biologist Katherine Mehl is finding it easy to partner with the people of Newfoundland. Mehl is travelling around Newfoundland quietly visiting eider duck sites to find areas that are suited for long-term research.

"To carry out DUC's research, I need the help of local people," says Mehl. "The genuine kindness and wealth of knowledge they freely share with me are priceless.

The fishermen know exactly where the birds are and they know how many were there in the past."

By looking into the past, Mehl knows her research efforts will help predict the future. At present, common eider duckling survival is unknown. With numerous hungry gulls swirling overhead, it is important to determine duckling survival rates. If an eider survives the three to four years to breeding stage, and if she continues to survive, she could breed for seven years or more.

However, there are many pressures affecting survival of these beautiful birds and that is what Mehl's research is all about. Partnering with Newfoundland's people and discreetly observing nesting sites is necessary for Mehl's study, which will help DUC find the solution to sustain the wondrous common eiders. S



Biologist Katherine Mehl and dog Maggie.

## Maritime Spring Volunteer Conference 2003

*"It's all about volunteers"*

It was a happy coincidence that the first ever Maritime Spring Volunteer Conference took place on the eve of Environmental Week in New Brunswick. A well-planned series of events designed to entertain, educate and thank the dedicated volunteers from all over the Maritimes served to showcase the hard work volunteers contribute to Ducks Unlimited Canada. In fact, the theme of this year's conference was "It's all about volunteers."

Dieppe's Crystal Palace Hotel and Amusement Park served as a base of operations and a special breakfast at McGinnis Landing Restaurant kicked off events. One of the highlights of the conference was the field trip and "Studio on the Marsh" visit to which the media was invited along with biologists, volunteers and their families. Dr. Mark Gloutney, Manager of Field Operations for Atlantic Canada, said of the tour: "This tour is an opportunity for the volunteers to experience firsthand what all their hard work can accomplish and what fundraising dollars can do."

The first stop was at the Hillsborough site of an old gypsum mine reclaimed by DUC. Here, education co-ordinator Colleen Martin demonstrated

the delicate ecosystem balance between insects, snails, waterfowl and wildlife. Further along at the Hopewell salt marsh, volunteers saw several areas secured by DUC in partnership with local communities and the federal government. This area will be left in its natural state for future generations.



The next stop was Calhoun Marsh, which has a high profile as a newer project. Its pristine condition was a stark contrast to the nearby Germantown Marsh, one of DUC's earliest projects. Now 30 years

old, it is in need of infrastructure rebuilding. Daly Creek came next, a good example of a DUC-managed marsh owned by the Canadian Wildlife Service. The tour included the studio of Lars Larsen, wildlife artist honoured in 1988 with the Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl Award. Unfortunately, Larsen has since passed away. He will be sorely missed by DUC. Other events included a barbecue lunch, a sporting clay shoot, and a lobster dinner at the Moncton Golf Club.

Saturday morning was dedicated to updates from guest speakers with a lively "Ask the Experts" panel. An interesting and fun info-fair filled the afternoon with a series of informative and interesting displays and demonstrations designed to augment volunteer activities. A DUC mascot with balloons for the kids made it a fun time too. A banquet in the evening wrapped up activities with prizes, auctions, and much camaraderie.

The entire conference was a great opportunity for volunteers to meet, compare notes, swap stories, and bring their experiences together in a common and unselfish cause. DUC is proud to recognize the work of these champions of wetland conservation who not only assist in benefiting waterfowl and wildlife but who also bestow a lasting legacy on us all. S