

## IN MEMORIAM

### Donald H. Baldwin (1934–2007) *A Classical Naturalist Remembered*

*Gregor G. Beck*

In December 2007, Ontario lost a respected and distinguished member of the ornithological community with the passing of Donald Baldwin. Don was a co-founder of the Long Point Bird Observatory (LPBO), a gifted science teacher, a pioneer environmental educator, a leader in nature-related tourism, and a keen outdoorsman throughout his life. He was born and raised in Bristol, England, received formal training in aviation-related tool making, saw active duty with the Royal Marines during the Suez conflict, but his life-long passion was always birds and nature. He was, in fact, the epitome of the "classical naturalist" with a broad knowledge of natural history and a gentleman's demeanor.

In 1958, Don immigrated to Canada, meeting his future wife, Maureen, on board ship during the crossing. Shortly thereafter, Don was one of a handful of visionary ornithological pioneers investigating the potential of various southern



**Don Baldwin** *Photo courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum.*

Ontario sites for North America's first permanent banding station. On the Victoria Day and Civic Holiday weekends in 1959, Don, Maureen, and David Hussell hiked out to Courtright Ridge, carrying tents and banding equipment to evaluate prospects for a banding station at the "Breakwater" at the southwest end of the ridge. On Thanksgiving weekend of that



Don Baldwin leading a "Walk with a Naturalist" run by the City of Toronto in the mid-1960s.

*Photo courtesy of Maureen Baldwin.*

year, an expanded group, which included Jim and Pat Woodford, made a first memorable trip to the Tip of Long Point. Long Point showed excellent potential for ornithological and practical reasons, and LPBO was officially established in the spring of 1960. Don remained active in the development of the fledgling observatory, both in the field and the initial organizing committee, and later on the board of directors. He also organized LPBO's first off-site survey, investigating mortality of birds at lighthouses and television towers.

During these early years in Canada, Don worked in the Department of Ornithology of the Royal Ontario Museum, where, among other responsibilities, he

played a major role in northern field expeditions in Ontario and Québec. In the mid-1960s, Don also worked part-time at Upper Canada College teaching science and nature programs at their Norval Outdoor School near Georgetown on the Credit River. In 1966, he was hired full-time by the school, spending a majority of his early years at Norval developing and leading outdoor science programs. The study of birds and bird banding, of course, figured prominently in many lessons, and Don kept meticulous records for over two decades, ultimately publishing a checklist of birds seen on the 450-acre property. In the 1960s and 1970s, environmental education was in its infancy and once again Don played a pioneering role.

After retirement from teaching in 1990, Don and Maureen moved to their summer retreat on Grand Manan Island in the Bay of Fundy, where Don led natural history tours and Maureen managed their bed and breakfast business. With his methodical approach and trademark diplomacy, Don made himself invaluable with the rapidly developing nature tourism business on the island. He played a particularly important role in the development and maintenance of an extensive system of nature trails, as well as building an impressive network of friends and supporters for local trails and nature. During these years, Don and Maureen continued to winter on Big Pine Key in Florida, birding and fishing, as they had done for years. In 2003, Maureen and Don moved to Port Rowan and once again Don could be found sharing his knowledge of nature and passion for birds with new friends and old, or enjoying a walk on a nature trail. Not infrequently, Don would visit the Old Cut field station of LPBO to watch birds, observe the banding, go for a walk, or reminisce about the early years of the banding station he co-founded close to a half century earlier.

Don Baldwin was a pioneer in bird studies and science education in Canada, and a gentleman naturalist who is greatly missed and fondly remembered.

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