



**American Friends of  
Canadian Conservation**

# Among Friends

**THE NEWSLETTER OF CROSS-BORDER CONSERVATION**



## **WHAT'S INSIDE**

**Better than Great Expectations | PAGE 2**

**Tax Savvy Produces Conservation  
and a Family Legacy | PAGE 3**

**Music for Birds and Bears | PAGE 5**

**What Do American Friends and  
Tundra Swans Have in Common? | PAGE 6**

**Celebrating a Vision Realized  
on Prince Edward Island | PAGE 7**

**Our Man of the Mountains | PAGE 9**

**Photo Contest Winners | PAGE 10**

**American Friends' Financial Report | PAGE 12**



## American Friends of Canadian Conservation

American Friends of Canadian Conservation (American Friends) is a U.S. charity that partners with Canadian conservation organizations to preserve Canada's natural areas, scenic landscapes, sensitive watersheds, recreation resources, important habitat for fish, birds and wildlife, and the places that hold generations of family memories.

[conservecanada.org](http://conservecanada.org)

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**On the cover:** To breed successfully Common Loons need quiet, undeveloped freshwater shoreline such as is found at Lost Bay Nature Reserve in Ontario. (See story page 3.)

## Better than Great Expectations

NOTHING EVER TURNS OUT THE WAY YOU EXPECT or predict. Luckily, sometimes the unanticipated outcome is different in a very good way. That is the case with American Friends of Canadian Conservation and its role in Canada's land conservation community. This issue of *Among Friends* celebrates the unforeseen but fortuitous results of American Friends evolving to adapt to the needs of its Canadian partners.

American Friends was created to remove an obstacle to strategic land conservation in Canada. In many provinces U.S. taxpayers owned properties that were a high priority for protection but there was no financial incentive to make land donations feasible. Canadian organizations needed a U.S. nonprofit to accept tax deductible gifts of land or conservation easements in Canada.

In 2011, American Friends completed its first transaction, in partnership with Nova Scotia Nature Trust. In 2021, we completed our 30th (coincidentally also in Nova Scotia) and also the first cross-border land donation in the province Prince Edward Island through a collaboration with the Island Nature Trust. PEI is the sixth province in which American Friends and its partners have permanently protected important

natural lands. These gifts have protected more than 3,000 acres with an appraised value of over \$18M USD. Certainly cause for celebration and gratitude to American Friends' founders for their prescience and dedication.

What they did not anticipate were the other benefits of a U.S. nonprofit whose mission is conserving Canada's ecological treasures and whose method is all about partnerships.

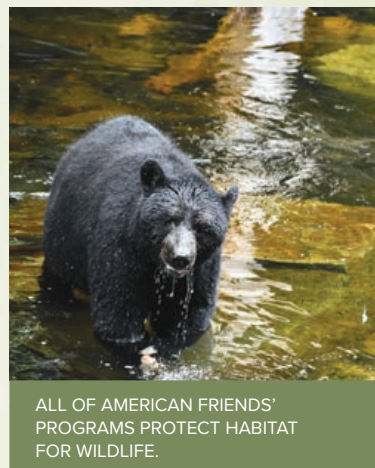
A decade of experience in the specialized arena of cross-border conservation gives American Friends unparalleled familiarity with the steps in a successful bi-national land donation or sale. Technical assistance to our partners, conservation-oriented U.S. landowners and their advisors is another unexpected and essential service that American Friends is providing.

We've been able to facilitate at least a dozen more transactions, and prevented sale and development of ecologically significant parcels, by sharing our singular knowledge and skills, demonstrating the value of American Friends' technical assistance.

American Friends' founders knew that gifts of cash, securities or even saleable real estate would also be tax deductible against U.S. income. But they could not have imagined the impact that could have for partners serving geographies most beloved by Americans. Contributions, mostly from U.S. individuals who are passionate about a special Canadian place, have allowed American Friends to make grants to our partners totaling more than \$8M USD in just the past ten years. Two of the articles describe how recent grants were leveraged with U.S. federal funding and monies from Canadian sources to turn each dollar from U.S. supporters into four dollars for conservation in Canada.

Although I don't always revel in the unexpected, I am delighted to share these stories of how unanticipated outcomes can have major positive impacts.

— Sandra Tassel, Program Coordinator



TONY AVIRGAN

ALL OF AMERICAN FRIENDS' PROGRAMS PROTECT HABITAT FOR WILDLIFE.



# Tax Savvy Produces Conservation and a Family Legacy

IN 1969, AN AMERICAN COUPLE CANOED around the Thousand Islands of Ontario. Ada and Joel Farber had both camped in the Adirondack and Pocono Mountains of New York State when they were children. The Canadian Thousand Islands region had a similar feel, inviting and less populated than New York, so they looked for property to purchase. The Farbers found five parcels along a stretch of the Gananoque River, in an area known as Lost Bay. The land cast a spell over them. One parcel had high cliffs rising from the water which reminded Ada and Joel of the rocky ledge in Heinrich Heine's famous poem about an enchanting mermaid seductress, so they named it Lorelei.

Almost fifty years later, the Farbers were trying to figure out how to keep the most cherished of the five parcels in the family. "We wanted to do the right thing for our kids and the land," recalls Joel. "Our son, Jonathan, had grown up on the land and loved it. He had a particular interest in the large piece we called Wolfgang, which is across the river from our cabin. When we were new to the area, we thought we heard wolves across the river, so we called it Wolfgang as we're Mozart lovers. Our other son, however had no interest in the properties." A major obstacle to doing the right thing was the significant Canadian capital gains tax Joel and Ada (or their estate) would owe if they gifted or bequeathed property to their sons.

Cameron Smith, a local conservation leader from the Kingston Field Naturalists Club, suggested that Ada and Joel reach out to Sandra Tassel of American Friends of Canadian Conservation (American Friends) about how to achieve their two goals. The Farbers had many conversations with Sandy over the course of several years. After she fully understood the family's needs and finances, Sandy suggested they donate Lorelei, together with a conservation easement on Wolfgang, to a Canadian land trust through the Canadian Ecological Gifts Program (EGP), instead of seeking a U.S. tax deduction. The Canadian tax credit for those gifts, available through EGP, would offset the Canadian capital gains tax on gifting the family cabin and Wolfgang to Jonathan.

Sandy recalls, "Cameron referred the Farbers to me because they are U.S. taxpayers. Everyone assumed that a U.S. tax deduction would convince Joel and Ada to donate and therefore they should gift their property to American Friends. But our work at the intersection



ADA AND JOEL FARBER

COURTESY OF FARBER FAMILY

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



TED KAISER, FLICKR.COM

UNDEVELOPED SHORELINE ON LOST BAY LAKE, ONTARIO

# Tax Savvy CONTINUED

of the U.S. and Canadian tax systems has taught us to look at all the possibilities. This was a situation where our knowledge was more important to successful conservation than accepting the land donation.”

After conferring with an accountant with cross-border expertise, Joel and Ada implemented Sandy’s suggestion. They donated the easement on Wolfgang and ownership of Lorelei to Ontario Nature to expand the 588-acre Lost Bay Nature Reserve. The Canadian tax credit completely offset the capital gains taxes on both the transfer to Jon and on the sale of two building lots, which generated money so Joel and Ada could provide financial support to their other son.

Joel said, “It was very important to us that Wolfgang remain undeveloped,” he explained. “The conservation easement prevents any building or any permanent changes to Wolfgang, but Jon will own the property and the parcel with the cabin on the other side of the river. There’s got to be some place

where humans don’t have the upper hand.”

Cameron Smith put the Farbers’ donations in the broader context. “The Gananogue River and Lost Bay are within the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve — one of only eighteen in Canada. The Arch connects the Canadian Shield

to the Appalachians, providing the most important north/south ecological pathway in eastern North America.” The easement on Wolfgang completed the protection of an entire side of Lost Bay, opposite an increasing number of waterfront cottages. Property values have quadrupled since the start of the Covid pandemic, making the timing of the Farbers’ donations fortuitous.

Tanya Pulfer, former Project Manager with Ontario Nature, says Lost Bay is a highly-prized recreation area, and home to a number of species at risk. “Sandy figured out the conservation and cross-



LOST BAY BEAVER POND AND WETLANDS

TED KAISER, FLICKR.COM

border tax structure. The family was really interested in seeing the land protected, yet they also had to address monetary and estate-planning concerns. Not only is their son interested in maintaining an interest in the land, but their granddaughter is also, so a family legacy is going forward.”

Without the solution tailored to the Farbers’ objectives, Joel and Ada would have sold the building lots, paid the tax on the sales, kept the other parcels and a substantial capital gains taxes would have been due when they passed away. The conservation opportunity would have been lost. That is why AF’s “technical assistance” plays such a valuable, although often invisible, role in Canadian landscapes where U.S. taxpayers own ecologically significant properties.

This cross-border conservation gift and easement mean so much to the landowners and their heirs, and also to Ontario Nature, The Lost Bay Reserve, and the larger Frontenac Arch. The migrating loons and other wildlife that cross from the Appalachians to the Canadian Shield can rest easy with their young, as this area is now protected forever.



SPOTTED SALAMANDERS ARE ONE OF THE CREATURES THAT THRIVE AT THE LOST BAY NATURE RESERVE.

DYLAN MARTIN, FLICKR.COM

— Sheila Harrington

*Sheila is a Director of the Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy in British Columbia (BC) and the former Executive Director, Land Trust Alliance of BC*

PER VERDONK, FLICKR.COM



WHITE ADMIRAL BUTTERFLY



# Music for Birds and Bears



ALYSSE GAFKJEN

THE WOOD BROTHERS BAND IS DONATING \$1 FROM EACH TICKET SOLD IN 2022 TO PROTECT HABITAT IN BRITISH COLUMBIA.

MUSIC IS WHAT MAKES Chris Wood tick. The 52-year-old bassist is co-founder of The Wood Brothers, a roots band based in Nashville, Tennessee. Together with Chris' brother Oliver on guitar and Jano Rix on drums and keyboards, the trio records and performs a unique blend of American music inspired by blues, gospel, soul, R&B, jazz, folk and rock & roll.

The Wood Brothers have gained a dedicated following across North America. In 2018, the band received a Grammy nomination for the record *One Drop of Truth*, released on their Honey Jar Records label.

Life-changing events and the pandemic brought Chris from Nashville to British Columbia (BC) Canada. Now Chris and the band are helping to protect wild places in his new home.

Chris and his wife Laura Matthias live on Pender Island, in the Southern Gulf Islands archipelago, where they run a small farm growing vegetables and hops. Laura is a wildlife biologist who has studied endangered species and helped restore wetlands through her work with various conservation organizations. Her experiences convinced Laura that the best way to help wildlife is to preserve threatened habitat.

Laura had been involved with The Nature Trust of BC, a land trust that protects ecologically significant landscapes throughout the Province, and she liked The Nature Trust's land acquisition and property management results. Her knowledge and connection

led to Chris contact American Friends of Canadian Conservation to find a way that The Wood Brothers could financially support The Nature Trust's work.

When asked what inspired Chris to ask Oliver and Jano to contribute a portion of their ticket sales to advance conservation in Canada, he said, "I'm very influenced by Laura, always interested in and passionate about the environment and what we can do, but for most of my life I was a bit overwhelmed and not sure what kind of action to take. I want to live what I believe, and that's what led us here."

As a result of Chris' desire to take action, The Wood Brothers is donating one dollar from each ticket sold on their 2022 tour to American Friends to underwrite the work of The Nature Trust. As of the end of August 2022, The Wood Brothers' contributions have allowed American Friends to grant nearly \$19,000 to The Nature

Trust to permanently protect endangered coastal wetlands in British Columbia. Every dollar will be matched with three more from The Nature Trust's Canadian donors and the North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA). (See next page.)

Chris is glad that his beloved music can make a difference for the environment. "It took a long time to appreciate that I could do something useful with my platform...I think it's very important to work across borders to preserve connectivity in terms of habitats and [bird] migration routes. We have to do things for wildlife for its own sake."

American Friends is delighted to help make Chris' vision a reality and to have a key role in turning The Wood

Brothers' music into conservation results. Together with The Nature Trust we thank the band and its fans for protecting places for birds and bears.

— Owen Gibbs  
The Nature Trust of British Columbia



GARRITY, J. FLICKR.COM

CHRIS WOOD

**Learn more about  
The Nature Trust  
of British Columbia  
on the next page.**

# What do American Friends and Tundra Swans Have in Common?

MIGRATORY BIRDS, such as tundra swans, know no international boundaries. They recognize only the ancient map for their annual journeys from sheltered wintering grounds to their summer homes where they breed, raise their young and prepare their bodies for the return trip. Their routes are embedded in their DNA, guiding them to sites where they rest and feed.

Like the swans, American Friends is inherently transborder. Its DNA (although corporate) guides the organization to: work in landscapes that transcend the 49th parallel; partner with entities and individuals who share our cross-border mission; and assist with securing financial support from U.S. funders that invest in protecting Canada's natural heritage.

The North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) was created more than thirty years ago to ensure that waterfowl can continue to follow those millenniums-old routes, and find food and respite along their perilous paths. The Nature Trust of British Columbia is working to protect the Columbia Wetlands — one of the most important of those sites in North America — with funding from NAWCA via the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Donations from U.S. taxpayers, including The Wood Brothers, make this funding possible.

COURTESY OF THE NATURE TRUST OF BC



THE COLUMBIA WETLANDS IS ONE OF ONLY 37 RAMSAR SITES IN CANADA.

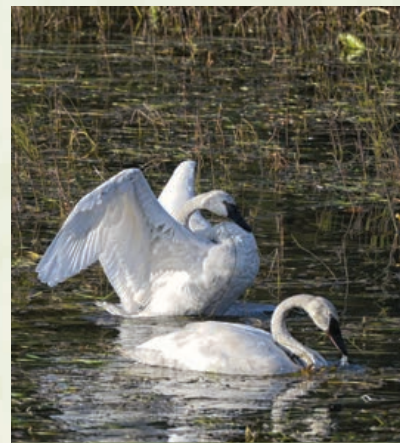
The Columbia Wetlands is the birthplace of the immense Columbia River watershed. Extending for more than 100 miles, it is one of the longest undisturbed wetland ecosystems in North America and one of the few remaining intact portions of the Pacific Flyway for migrating birds.

The area is sanctuary to more than 216 animal species including birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians and mammals. Over 250 different migrating bird species have been identified in the Columbia Wetlands. More than 15,000 migrating birds depend upon the wetlands to survive their journeys north and south each year. It is also a feeding ground in winter for elk, deer, wolves, cougars, grizzly bears and other wildlife.

World-renowned wildlife artist and environmentalist, Robert Bateman, describes the Columbia Wetlands in these terms, "One of the most precious things on a world scale..."

The Nature Trust recently purchased 143 acres of rare native habitat to expand permanent protection in the Columbia Wetlands. NAWCA funding was a key component of the financing for this acquisition. American Friends of Canadian Conservation facilitated contributions from U.S. supporters to meet the required 1:1 match from U.S. sources.

If you are passionate about the wildlife that needs permanently preserved lands and waters that transcend the artificial border between our two countries, The Nature Trust of BC and American Friends invite you to invest in the future of the Columbia Wetlands and other critical riparian habitat. Each dollar you contribute unlocks three more dollars for tundra swans and other migratory waterfowl.



PHILIP KUNTZ

TUNDRA SWANS AND OTHER WATERFOWL RELY ON THE COLUMBIA WETLANDS (DURING MIGRATION).



# Celebrating a Vision Realized on Prince Edward Island

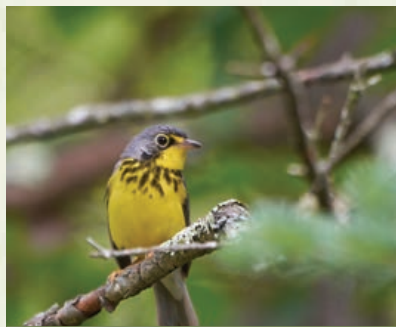


ISLAND NATURE TRUST

TREMBLING ASPEN ARE ONE OF THE TREES IN THE FORESTS IN THE NEW EPPIG FLOWER NATURAL AREA.

FOR YEARS, PETER AND MOLLY EPPIG AND THEIR FAMILY left their home in New Hampshire to spend summers on the Maine coast. In 1993 when their usual vacation rental was unavailable, their boys suggested they find a destination with warmer water for swimming. By this happy quirk of fate, the Eppig family made their way to Prince Edward Island- and yes, Canada's smallest province is surrounded by sandy beaches with ocean water that is quite tolerable for swimming!

That visit in 1993 turned out to be the first of many. The Eppigs have returned to the Cable Head neighborhood on the north shore of PEI every year, except 2020 when Covid closed the U.S./Canada border. In 2003 they built a vacation home in the style of a traditional Island farmhouse. Although the boys are grown and not always able to make it to PEI, Molly and Peter still spend as much time as possible on



JOHN SUTTON, FLICKR.COM

THE FORESTED WETLAND IS HABITAT FOR THREATENED MIGRATORY SONGBIRDS, SUCH AS CANADA WARBLER.

PEI enjoying hiking, beach walking, snorkelling and cycling.

"In 2018 we attended an information session hosted by Island Nature Trust (INT) and American Friends of Canadian Conservation (American Friends) where we learned that American owners of Canadian property can donate ecologically sensitive land and realize tax benefits in the U.S.," said the Eppigs. "We decided to protect a wooded portion of our property that includes a bog which has been identified as ecologically important. We were so pleased to collaborate with American Friends and Island Nature Trust to ensure conservation of this property in perpetuity and we certainly encourage other American owners of PEI property to look at the American Friends of Canadian Conservation organization to see if there is a fit for their long-term plans."

Megan Harris, the former Director of Conservation at INT notes that about 3.3% of the private land on the Island is owned by Americans, and most of that acreage is highly-prized coastal property sought for second home construction and for conservation of fragile habitat.

"We were so pleased when we heard from Molly

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



# Celebrating a Vision CONTINUED

and Peter regarding their intentions for their PEI property,” said Megan. “Most inquiries we receive from U.S. landowners are from family members trying to settle an estate and honour the wishes of their loved ones. But people who inherit property

**It’s always great to see butterflies and other pollinators within the protected properties as these areas serve as a haven free from pesticide applications and with plentiful habitat.**

AMY FROST-WICKS,  
LAND STEWARDSHIP  
PROGRAM MANAGER, INT

cannot utilize the tax incentives and it is difficult to find a mutually satisfactory conservation approach. We are so inspired that the Eppigs acted on their vision for the land now — in this case even during a pandemic!”

Megan recalls that collaborating with American Friends was a positive experience that produced an exciting conservation outcome. “I appreciated their great depth of knowledge on cross-border conservation transactions,” said Megan. “Our advice to other land trusts working on similar projects: never assume that local lawyers and accountants will be familiar with the nuances of this type of donation — for most, it will

be a completely new learning adventure!”

INT has designated the land donated by Peter and Molly as the Eppig-Flower Natural Area. It is contiguous with a 495-acre woodland and wetland complex

which contains Island Nature Trust’s Perret McKinnon Natural Area — providing excellent connectivity to an existing protected space. The diverse ecosystems and services the natural area provides will be protected forever for the benefit of PEI flora and fauna, Island residents and visitors alike.

Land protection is closely tied to family histories and memories. It’s fabulous when we can celebrate the two together!

— Carol Horne

*Carol Horne is on the board of American Friends. She is the owner of Wordscape Communications in Charlottetown PEI.*



THE MARSH AND SHRUBS ON (THE EPPIGS’) PROPERTY ARE IDEAL FOR THE RARE LITTLE COPPER BUTTERFLY.

ISLAND NATURE TRUST



ISLAND NATURE TRUST

PEATLAND-TYPE WETLAND AND CONTIGUOUS FOREST ACT AS NATURAL CARBON SINKS, IMPORTANT FOR MITIGATING CLIMATE CHANGE.



# Our Man of the Mountains (and rivers and oceans and prairies)

ACCOMPLISHING CONSERVATION on an ambitious scale requires energy, investment and expertise from people representing the entire spectrum of land protection advocates. So American Friends is lucky to have David Genter on our Board of Directors.

David is a true outdoorsman, with impressive qualifications as a biologist and conservation professional. His training in Biology (University of Colorado) and Zoology (University of Montana) was invaluable in his careers with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Trust for Public Land (TPL). David spends as much time as possible fishing, hunting and exploring nature in the Northern Rockies, coastal British Columbia, Alaska and the northern prairie states and provinces.

During David's tenure with TPL, in the Montana office, he completed some of the largest land and forest conservation projects in the country through partnerships with private landowners, timber and mining companies, local communities, and other non-profits.

"My interest in and appreciation of Canada came early in life — through extended family vacations to wild country, national and provincial parks and special places throughout Ontario, Quebec and road trips through much of the Maritime provinces," says David. Conducting cross-border research on sea ducks and prairie birds gave David an opportunity to work with Parks Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service, academics from Simon Fraser University and the Harlequin Duck Society as well as BC Fish and Wildlife.

These days David has his own land conservation business, Big Sky Land Group. He works with local communities, land trusts and private landowners to craft conservation acquisitions protecting wildlife habitat, especially in communities with high rates of development and growing needs for public access and recreation.

Genter sees an important role for American Friends in strengthening cross-border conservation relationships and helping Canadian entities to achieve their objectives in landscapes that extend across boundaries. "The support American Friends provides is so important for preserving ecologically

significant and recreationally valuable landscapes in Canada."

"It's a small but highly effective organization that provides tremendous leverage — both in dollars and conservation impact," says David. He is convinced that an increasing number of American owners of land in Canada, and U.S. and Canadian citizens who are concerned about the future of Canada's natural heritage, will join us in our bi-national conservation work.

In addition to American Friends, David has supported several regional land trusts, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Montana Trout Unlimited, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, and the American Fisheries Society. David also serves as Board Trustee with the Helena Symphony Orchestra.

David and his wife Heidi reside in southwestern Montana, near Bozeman. When not travelling to wild places across the globe or fly fishing near and far, they can be found at home with their dogs, horses, honey bees and expansive gardens.

— Carol Horne



DAVID GENTER AND HIS WIFE HEIDI ON A RECENT TRIP TO NORWAY.



# Winners from the “Oh, Canada!” Photo Contest



## GRAND PRIZE WINNER

Denise Burns (Ontario), *Morningstar Mill*, Decew Falls, St. Catherine's, Ontario. The Mill is a Canadian heritage site that adjoins the renowned 550 mile-long Bruce Trail.

AMERICAN FRIENDS' OH CANADA! Photography Contest was a celebration of being outdoors and connecting with the world around us while the border was closed due to Covid. We invited everyone who shares our passion for Canada's natural and cultural heritage to take a virtual holiday by sharing their images. The contest was open to all amateur photographers. We received more than 500 photos from Canada and the U.S.

The Grand Prize Winner and four Runners Up were selected by John D'Onofrio — a widely-published photographer and the owner/editor/publisher of *Adventures NW Magazine*. The winners of each category were selected by popular vote.

Enjoy this sampling of the images chosen by John and some of the category winners. We hope they inspire you to help conserve Canada's special places.

Congratulations to Denise Burns of Ontario, whose photograph "Morningstar Mill" won the Grand Prize. The Mill, located at Decew Falls in St. Catherine's Ontario, portrays a Canadian heritage site that adjoins the renowned 550 mile-long Bruce Trail, Canada's longest marked footpath.

American Friends' partner, the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC), is one of Ontario's largest land trusts. BTC preserves and cares for land within the UNESCO designated Niagara Escarpment Biosphere to protect its ecosystems for the benefit



## SECOND RUNNER-UP: GRAND PRIZE

Cindy Flick (Nova Scotia) *Morning Fog*, Isaac's Harbor, Nova Scotia



## FOURTH RUNNER UP: GRAND PRIZE

Mark Haddas (British Columbia) *Green Heron Family*, Vancouver, British Columbia





**FIRST RUNNER UP: GRAND PRIZE**

Glen Bylsma (Ontario), *Reflections*, French River Provincial Park, Ontario

of all. It strives to secure and steward a permanent conservation corridor to protect the trail itself and the experience of hiking it. BTC and American Friends work together to protect the 34% of the Bruce Trail corridor still vulnerable to development.

**SEE MORE WINNING PHOTOS ON PAGE 12.**



**WINNER: TRADITIONS CATEGORY**

David K. Cairns (Prince Edward Island) *A Range Light Stands Guard*, Bellevue Cove, Prince Edward Island



**THIRD RUNNER UP: GRAND PRIZE**

Frank Loomer (New Brunswick), *Rising*, Ritchie Lake, Quispamsis, New Brunswick



**WINNER: PEOPLE IN NATURE CATEGORY**

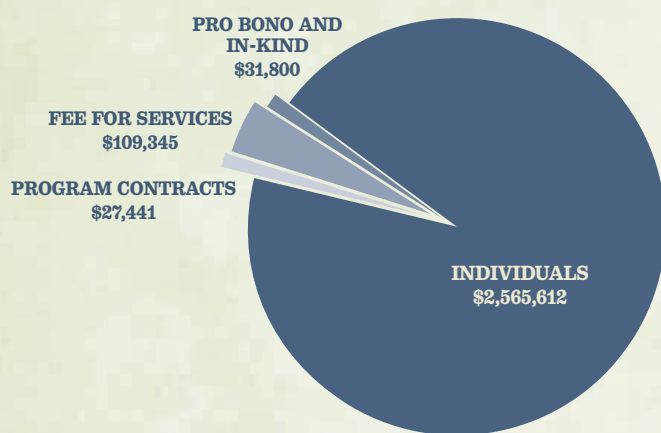
Glen Bylsma (Ontario), *Romance*, French River Provincial Park, Ontario



# American Friends Financial Report – FISCAL YEAR 2021/22

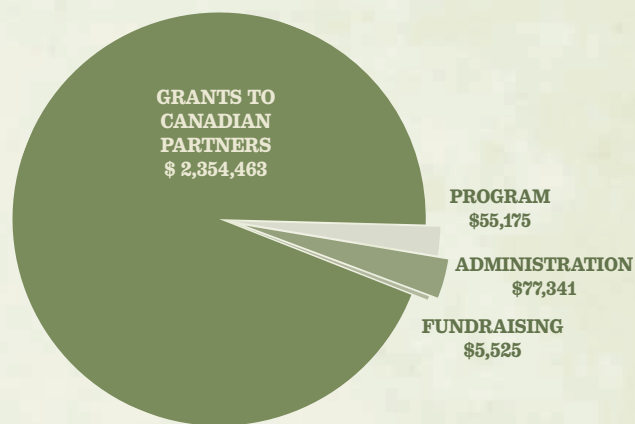
**REVENUE \$ 2,734,198**

**EXPENSES \$ 2,492,504**



## REVENUE SUMMARY

Individuals	\$ 2,565,612
Pro bono and In-kind	31,800
Fee for Services	109,345
Fundraising	5,525
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,734,198</b>



## EXPENSES SUMMARY

Grants to Canadian Partners	\$ 2,354,463
Program	55,175
Administration	77,341
Fundraising	5,525
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,492,504</b>

Special thanks to the foundations that supported American Friends' partnership with the Peskotomuhkati First Nation and the Nature Trust of New Brunswick to protect land in the Skutik (St. Croix) River watershed:

**Davis Conservation Foundation, Maine Community Foundation,  
Quimby Family Foundation and the William P. Wharton Trust**

## More Winning Photos from the "Oh, Canada!" Photo Contest

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11



### WINNER: PLANTS, TREES AND FLOWERS CATEGORY

Frank Loomer (New Brunswick), *Lakeside Irises*, Carpenter Lake, Rothesay, New Brunswick



### WINNER: WILDLIFE CATEGORY

Dr. Gray Merriam (Ontario), *Arctic Fox Hunting Sticklebacks on Hudson Bay Shore*, Wapusk National Park, Manitoba