

WILDLIFE '87: GAINING MOMENTUM

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Environment Minister Tom McMillan designated 1987 "a year of wildlife conservation in Canada." It was to mark 100 years since the establishment, by Sir John A. MacDonald on 8 June 1887, of the first bird sanctuary in Canada at Last Mountain Lake, Saskatchewan. Although the idea of dedicating the year to wildlife was endorsed by provincial and territorial wildlife ministers, it was the non-government conservation groups which took the initiative and played a lead role in making "Wildlife '87" a success. The Canadian Nature Federation coordinated and communicated with participating groups across Canada. In February 1986, a national committee chaired by Joy Finlay of Edmonton began to bring attention to the many conservation efforts planned for 1987.

Wildlife '87 aims were to recognize the importance of wildlife conservation in Canada, to increase public awareness of our wildlife heritage, to establish new conservation projects, to protect and set aside important wild areas and to involve people young and old in conservation projects.

Wildlife '87 Newsletters recorded the events. Two new naturalist clubs were formed in New Brunswick in January. Symposia on Bear-People Conflicts, Northern Forest Owls, the Fraser River Estuary, Canada's Wetlands Ecology and Conservation, and Workshops on Bird Banding, and Urban Natural Areas were held. Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon release projects were undertaken. The Boy Scouts were awarded the World Conser-



Award presentation to Wildlife '87 Chairperson Joy Finlay by Prince Philip

Bob Lane

vation Badge. Newfoundland voted for Black Spruce and the Puffin as their provincial tree and bird and British Columbia selected the Steller's Jay as their provincial bird. There were Owl Howls, Bird Fairs, Decoy Carving Competitions, Birdathons, Amphibian Hunts, Slide Competitions, and Park Weekends. Hamilton, Ontario hosted the Coote's Paradise Wildlife Festival. Several books were published including the *Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas*, a *Wildlife '87 Teacher's Manual* and *Our Wildlife Heritage - a century of use and management in B.C.*

The first Wildlife Reserve protected under the *Wildlife '87* Program was 64 hectares of aspen parkland east of Edmonton. This was soon followed by seven new Ecological Reserves in Alberta and six Wilderness Areas in British Columbia. Nova Scotia published its first Wildlife Policy and tabled a new Wildlife Act. New Brunswick designated a Nature Reserve protecting the habitat of 17 species of orchids. The Canadian commitment to the Ramsar Convention was increased by listing 11 new wetlands of International Importance.

These are a few examples from over 160 projects listed in the *Wildlife '87* National Calendar of Events by 10 May 1987.

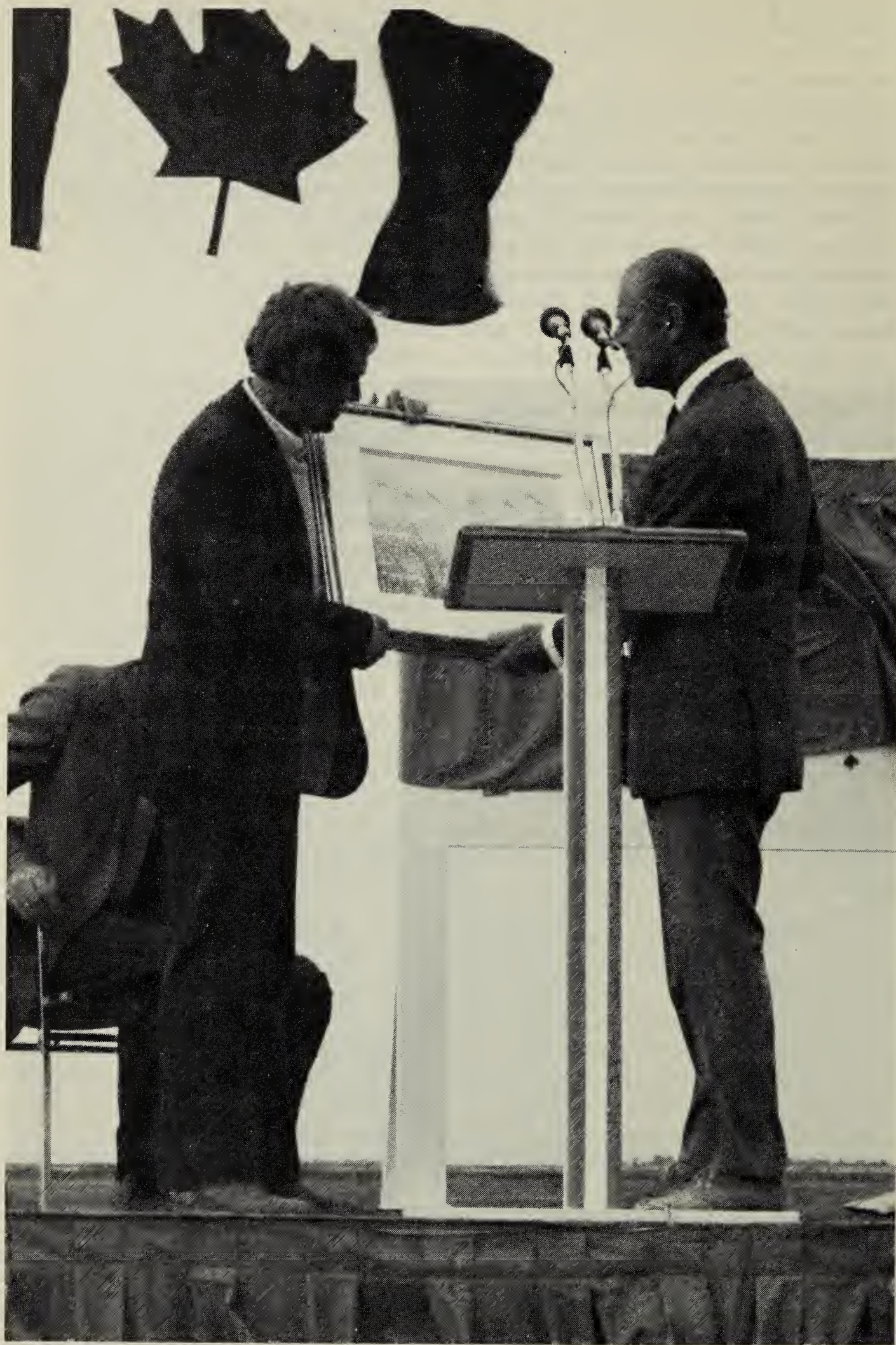
In July two new National Parks agreements were signed — one for Lyell Island and part of southern Queen Charlotte Islands, British Columbia, the second for part of the Bruce Peninsula, Ontario. During the Parks Canada centennial year, 1985, not one new park was established! In the fall of 1986 Environment Minister McMillan had announced terms for establishing the Ellesmere Island Park reserve and declared Polar Bear Pass on Bathurst Island, N.W.T., as a National Wildlife Area.

Saskatchewan hosted several national and international conferences in 1987. At the Ramsar Conference in Regina were

delegates from 60 nations. The 16th Annual Canadian Nature Federation meeting was held in Saskatoon. In the fall were the annual meetings of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and the Whooping Crane Conservation Association. Delegates from all these meetings visited Last Mountain Lake. Finally, the Second International Muskox Symposium was held in Saskatoon in October.

At Last Mountain Lake a number of projects were completed by the Canadian Wildlife Service and cooperators for improved wildlife management and public information. In cooperation with Ducks Unlimited Canada, two dykes were constructed on Lanigan Creek, at the north end of the main Basin. This will provide permanent, extensive shallow marsh and wet meadow habitats in areas which were formerly flooded only in years of very high water levels. West of the lake a large electric pump was installed to provide water to an alkali basin which in recent years has often been dry. Both projects will manage water to provide marsh habitat for waterfowl, cranes, shorebirds and other wildlife.

A Public Information Centre was completed adjacent to the headquarters at the lake. In this kiosk are displays on the history, wildlife, habitats and management programs of the area and information on Last Mountain Lake including a bird checklist. An Auto Tape Tour, recently revised, is available from the Area Manager. It takes one to several hours to drive the 14 km loop to view wildlife and conservation programs while listening to the tape recorded messages. There are also two self-guided nature trails, the Grassland Trail featuring a buffalo rubbing stone, and the Wetland Trail with a marsh boardwalk. An observation tower is now located 1 km east of the Information Centre. From this tower the spectacular sight of thousands of geese, cranes, ducks and other birds moving on an autumn evening between feeding and roosting areas



Presentation to Prince Philip of Robert Bateman painting of pelicans at Last Mountain Lake
Bob Lane



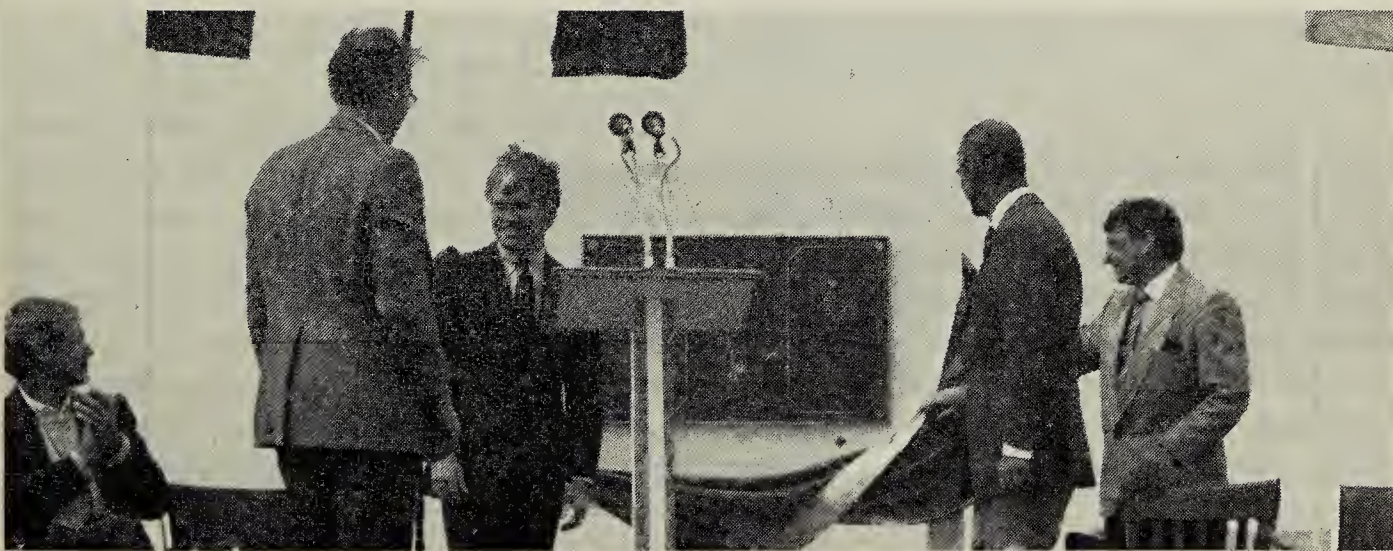
Signing the agreement for Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area Bob Lane

An historic day for Last Mountain Lake was 5 June 1987. An Agreement between Canada and Saskatchewan was signed to establish Last Mountain Lake as a National Wildlife Area, nearly 100 years after the site was first designated a sanctuary. After the signing a centennial plaque showing the original sanctuary lands was unveiled. His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip witnessed and gave his approval to the agreement drawing attention to wildlife conservation in Canada. An Environment Canada award was presented to Joy Finlay for her dedicated work for *Wildlife '87*, and a painting of "White Pelicans at Last Mountain Lake" by Robert Bateman was given to Prince Philip. Proceeds from a limited edition of prints of the painting will go toward World Wildlife Fund conservation programs.

provides an insight into the importance of Last Mountain Lake as a staging area for migrating birds.

A Centennial Display on Last Mountain Lake was developed by the Canadian Wildlife Service in conjunction with the J.G. Diefenbaker Centre (University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon). This display depicts wildlife conservation at local, national and international levels and is filled with photos and historic information. The tour of Saskatchewan centres by this travelling centennial display will continue into 1988.

What has been accomplished by *Wildlife '87*? Although those who have struggled long towards establishment of a Grasslands National Park were deeply disappointed to see no final agreement between Saskatchewan and Canada, many other conservation projects were successfully completed. Most important of all, the need to work together for conservation became even more apparent as a result of this year. The *Gaining Momentum* theme, suggesting that the work of wildlife conservation has just begun and will go on beyond 1987, was well chosen.



Plaque commemorating creation of the Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area Bob Lane