

Mr. John Gilhen began his professional scientific career at the Nova Scotia Museum in 1963 caring for public exhibits of live fishes. His aptitude as a natural historian was quickly recognized and by 1965 he has been absorbed into the curatorial ranks, retiring as Assistant Curator in 1994. John continues to work at the Nova Scotia Museum almost daily in his current position as Curator Emeritus.

While John's interests are varied, a recent co-publication deals with ground beetles, his consuming interest other than fishes has been Nova Scotia's amphibians and reptiles. His 1984 volume, the Amphibians and Reptiles of Nova Scotia, remains the definitive work on the 24 species then known to occur in the province (one has since been added); each of the 162 pages of this book is replete with original field observations painstakingly collected over more than two decades. John continues to remain active as a researcher in herpetology, with papers on garter snake courtship and defensive toxins in newts in press (the latter in collaboration with researchers at St. Mary's University and Tohoku University, Japan).

Although John's contributions as a herpetological researcher are significant, he has also been an active and concerned contributor to conservation based initiatives dealing with amphibians and reptiles. He represented Nova Scotia on Canada's National Task force on Declining Amphibian Populations (1990-1993), and he remains a member of federal species recovery teams for Blanding's Turtle and the Northern Ribbon Snake, and is also a member of the Nova Scotia Wood Turtle Management Team.

Recognizing that unless there is public support for species conservation and the unique role museums can play in educating the public, John has also published on amphibian decline and wood turtle status in broadly accessible nature magazines. He continues to lecture regularly to the general public and amateur specialist groups, on occasion as far away as Germany. John's annual spring 'salamander meander' has been an annual public program through the Nova Scotia Museum for an astounding 27 years! His work with young scientists has ranged from programs that explain the importance of amphibians in aquatic ecosystems to primary school-age children to his role as a thesis examiner for Acadia University graduate students working in herpetology. John's activities as a scientist/conservationist have not gone unrecognized ' he is a recipient of a Halifax 'Metro's Green Scene' certificate in appreciation of his efforts on behalf of the environment and in 2000 he received the inaugural Rotary Club Gold Wheel Award for Science and Technology.

John's move upon retirement from museum curator to museum volunteer has been seamless. Even though the paychecks have stopped, John just keeps coming to work at the Museum. He continues to devote himself unstintingly to the museums collections and the people of Nova Scotia, but especially to the salamanders, frogs, turtles, and snakes of the province.