

Old men

Birds I View

Bill Montevecchi

As is often the case, this year's landing on Funk Island was different and exciting. It involved jumping from a ladder roped over the bow of the pitching long-liner then judo-rolling onto the island's ever so solid and narrow granite "bench". Such an arrival evokes a very intense and warm feeling of "so glad to be here".

Following a very productive 12-day stay working with gannets, murre, puffins, fulmars and kittiwakes, Chantelle Burke, Stefan Garthe and I were back aboard the *Lady Easton II*. It was then that Skipper Larry Easton asked "How long do you think you can keep doing this?" He's asked me this before, but at 59 years of age, I ponder the question more often than previously.

It's time for a realistic assessment. Let's check the boat crew. At 72 years young, handsome Ed Easton, Larry's dad, helped get our gear to the island. As he has been doing for the past 15 years, he also cut the 14-foot tent poles that hold our Labrador trapper's tent more or less upright in the gales and storms of the outrageous North Atlantic. He also served bottled moose and whipped up a delicious pork chop dinner on the voyage out to the island.

Rugged Sam Windsor roped and tossed our huge pile of gear from the boat to the "bench." In previous years, Sam had carried our stack of tent poles on his shoulder. This would normally be a "2-man job" with rests for us. Yet when asked if he wanted help, Sam referred to the load "as just a bunch of sticks, bye" and

shouldered on.

And while we are not all old men, young Chantelle and massive Stefan surely don't concern themselves with old men's queries. But things change, and changes are often more profound with age. Or so it seems when considering not doing something that you've committed much if not most of your life to.

So back to Larry's question - how long can I keep doing this? Well, like Ed, Sam and Ted Cross (see next), I don't know. I do know that it will not be forever, which I really didn't consider when I was younger. And though I cannot answer the question, like Ed, Sam and Ted, I am determined to resolve it. Of this we are certain.

“Hey Larry, thanks for great pick-up. Same time next year. Godspeed.”

Ted Cross - world class bird photographer

For decades, Ted Cross has been traveling from Princeton, New Jersey to many of the remotest places on earth to photograph birds. In 1987 at 63, he visited Funk Island following previous photographic trips to Baccalieu and Cape St. Mary's.

This July, Ted returned to Newfoundland cameras in hand with his photographic assistant and photographer, Guy Horner. Again, I joined in on the action. In pursuit of avian subjects, we visited Cape St. Mary's, the Bird Islands in Maberly near Elliston, Eagle Beach near Trinity, and Merasheen, Long and King Islands in Placentia Bay (with eagle expert Harry Brown).

While we experienced blankets of fog during trip, especially in Placentia Bay, spirits were not dampened and photographing went on unimpeded. While he was photographing puffins and guillemots

from the cliff top at Maberly, I asked Ted how it was going. Without removing his gaze from the viewfinder attached to the Nikon 800 mm lens and it seemed without knowing I was there, he said “This is just magnificent.” And so it was and the focus was maintained through the week.

Besides his over-riding passion for waterbirds, Ted pursues diverse interests. He is an expert in minority economics and has written two books on the subject, *Black Capitalism* which received the McKinsey Foundation Book Award, and *The Black Power Imperative*. He’s a former editor of the *Harvard Law Review* and founder and editor of *Business and Society Review* that focuses on business ethics and corporate responsibility. He was a founder of the professional publishing company, Warren, Gorman & Lamont that in turn helped nourish the “Irish tiger” economic development.

Ted has been a Public Governor of America Stock Exchange and is a Trustee of the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. He has made generous contributions to seabird research and scholarships at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Ted’s magnificent photos are compiled in his coffee table book, *Birds of the Sea and Shore*. Recently, he organized a political effort in the USA – BirdersUnited.com – check it out. Whew!

Like Ed, Sam and me, Ted is a fortunate man with a shared interest in birds and sea, he too is enjoying a full, enriched life.

“Hey, Ted. How long are you going to keep do this?”

Birds in the area and around the province

The tundra swan is still at Cape Freels. According to Bruce Mactavish, it is the same bird that occurred earlier in the Codroy Valley.

The Pinchgut area near Harricott is quite a hotspot for birds and other wildlife. While kayaking in the area, Dave and Joan Reddin observed double-crested cormorants, eagles, seals, sharpshinned hawks and a northern harrier.