



Mary's Story

Mary Hart Gilliland lived every day with a simple philosophy: "I'll keep on helping."

Mary was active for nature in a variety of wild and wonderful ways. She gave introduction to birdwatching lessons in her community, to the delight of keen naturalists of all ages. Mary helped test the validity and consistency of breeding bird counts for over 2 years, rising at 3:00AM to conduct five-hour Breeding Bird Surveys.

Mary served many vital roles with Nature Canada, including President, and led many critical conservation successes, including the designation of lands to be protected for Grasslands National Park. As she finished her tenure on the Board, she vowed to keep protecting Canada's spectacular wildlife and wild places.

"I've done just about anything and everything I could to further what I personally believe in—our universal need to value and preserve the natural world around us—and to convince others to join in," said Mary. "Despite it all, I see how much there is left to do. I wonder at the work I leave my children and grandchildren, and theirs."

Mary, ever the activist, took action by choosing to remember Nature Canada in her Will. She was surprised at how easily it was accomplished—she told her lawyer, his secretary typed the document and she signed it. Just after completing her Will, Mary said, "I feel wonderful, perhaps even a little bit proud of myself for having finally committed a long-standing good intention to paper."

Mary continued, "Maybe there will even be a mention of me somewhere, someday, and my granddaughters will say, 'She was our grandma. She loved nature. Especially birds.' Could I be better remembered?"

And indeed, Mary is fondly remembered! Since her passing in 2010, Mary's love for nature lives on in the habitats and species her gift has helped protect, and in the moments nature lovers across Canada have enjoyed, thanks to her thoughtfulness.