Maine Audubon

2005 CONSERVATIONIST OF THE YEAR

Dr. David Evers

Dave Evers arrived in Maine in the early 1990's with a pioneering method for capturing and banding common loons. Since then Dave and his colleagues at BioDiversity Research Institute in Gorham have captured and banded over 3,000 common loons across the United States and Canada. His research has provided answers to many long-standing questions about loon conservation and biology. Such as how long the birds mate (about seven years) at what age they first breed (seven), and how far they move far from their natal lake (not very far at all).

Using the capture techniques Dave pioneered with BRI, researchers around the globe are looking into all aspects of loon biology and behavior, including genetics, migration patterns, and perhaps most importantly, the effects of mercury on the birds.

Over the past decade, Dave has worked diligently to document the detrimental effects of mercury on common loons and other wildlife. His work has shown that mercury is pervasive and alarmingly high in some parts of the northeast, and that high levels of mercury in loons and other species adversely affects both behavior and reproductive success. His early research results were used by the Maine Legislature to reduce mercury emissions in Maine and to eliminate from the waste stream certain products containing mercury. More recently, after bringing together over 70 scientists from different disciplines and compiling thousands of data points documenting high levels of mercury in fish and wildlife, Dave identified and mapped nine mercury hotspots in northeastern North America, four of them in Maine. These findings and others about mercury in the northeast are summarized in a recent special issue of the journal *Ecotoxicology*, which Dave coedited.

Not satisfied with simply publishing results in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, Dave has taken the important step of linking science with sound policy, a step often overlooked or avoided by scientists. Dave summarized the key results that appeared in *Ecotoxicology* in a finely illustrated and written publication titled *Mercury Connections*, which he shared with key members of Congress in March of this year. His presentations on Capital

Hill on the effects of mercury, and his efforts to make this information accessible to policy makers and legislators, helped kill key proposals aimed at loosening restrictions on mercury emissions. Dave's research and findings on mercury will be central to the pending lawsuit by the Attorneys General in the northeast against the Environmental Protection Agency, which up to this point has relied on little or no science in creating new rules that weaken the Clean Air Act. In addition to helping support legislation in both Vermont and New Hampshire that reduces mercury at the state level, the information in *Mercury Connections* is helping Representative Tom Allen craft a bill to set up a mercury monitoring program for the northeast.

Dave's passion and devotion as a scientist, his creativity and resource fullness as a researcher, and his ability to translate the world of science for the general public and our policymakers have helped significantly reduce mercury emissions in the United Stat3es. For Dave's leadership and contribution to a cleaner environment for people and for wildlife, both in Maine and across the nation, Maine Audubon is delighted to name Dr. David Evers our 2005 Conservationist of the Year.