



Joyce and Avery Booth
Photo: © Cynthia Ross

Joyce Booth

An Emotional Purchase Translates into an Ecological Gift

In the 1980s, Joyce Vaughan Booth, a teacher, and her husband Avery, a factory clerk, used to drive from Lennoxville to the Sutton Mountains area where Mr. Booth's family lived. One day, they saw a whole mountainside clear-cut near Sutton. It upset them. "I was angry inside myself for a long time after I saw that," Mrs. Booth remembers. "Some time later, we learned that there was a 55-acre parcel of land for sale in that area. There were a lot of big beeches on it. I had inherited some money from my parents and I decided to buy it right away so I would have a piece of land nobody could buy and spoil. My husband and I didn't even walk to the top of the property before I bought it," she recalls, laughing.

The property, located in Mansonville, had been partly logged by the former owner. Except for a logging road that ran part way up the hill and just reached the border of the tract of land, there was no other access. "We didn't get to know the land very well, but we would go hiking, biking or skiing there a few times a year.



The Moose, the largest member of the deer family, limits its activity in winter to save energy.

Photo: © Pierre Pouliot, MRNF

I remember walking along the road very early one morning in September, and reaching a spot where I suddenly found myself in the midst of about thirty Black-

throated Blue Warblers. One other time, I saw Moose tracks in the hard, slippery crust of snow. I could tell that the poor Moose had been struggling through the snow. One day, I also observed a Scarlet Tanager attacking a robin, which is yet a larger bird. I guess the robin was in the wrong territory," Mrs. Booth recalls with pleasure.

In 1998, her husband passed away unexpectedly. Mrs. Booth didn't feel like going to her land by herself anymore. She considered leaving it to her three children or selling it, but the access was too difficult, she thought. More than anything, she wanted to make sure that nobody would come and cut the trees.



The Black-throated Blue Warbler frequents mixed or deciduous forests like the once covering the land donated by Joyce Booth.

Photo: © Rafy Rodriguez

As a member of the Ruitter Valley Land Trust, she knew about the possibility of donating land to this organization dedicated to protecting the valley. So in 2002, she made an ecological donation of the 55-acre property in the Sutton Mountains. Her donation was made through Environment Canada's Ecological Gift Program, which provided her with a substantial tax credit. "I didn't think about it at the time, but it certainly was worthwhile. It was wonderful since for a few years I didn't have to pay income tax!" she says.

"I know that not everyone can buy a piece of land to save it, but if people inherit some land they don't

need or want, rather than just ignoring it or selling it to developers, they should consider donating it to nature."

In keeping with Mrs. Booth's wishes, there won't be any tree harvesting on the newly protected forestland; however, scientific research activities will be allowed.

The many small streams that run through the property are potential habitats for different salamander species, which, like all amphibians, are especially threatened by pollution and habitat loss. Besides ensuring that her property will be protected forever, Joyce Booth's ecological donation adds to the gifts provided by other donors in the Ruitter Valley and will help to preserve one of the few remaining areas of unfragmented forest in southernmost Quebec; this is a legacy that generations of warblers, struggling Moose and intrepid

tanagers will certainly appreciate.



Mostly found in southwestern Quebec, the Scarlet Tanager prefers to nest in the high and dense deciduous forest canopy.

Photo: © Michel Lamarche