

Expert marvels at Burns Bog

British botanist says more should be done to protect this "precious place"

by Maureen Gulyas

After Mother Teresa, the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Brits think Dr. David Bellamy should write the 10 commandments for the next century. It's not because Bellamy is Biblically-inclined, but his evangelical passion about the world's bogs was a likely contributor in making him one of the more popular choices for the task.

The international bog expert was out of his native England when the British Broadcasting Corporation sent out the call to its radio listeners. "I knew nothing about it, but I was surprised to hear that I had tied for fourth place with Oprah Winfrey," he laughed.

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Dr. David Bellamy

That was the only time Bellamy, a large expressive man, strayed in an interview with the Optimist Monday. For nearly an hour, the 62-year-old spoke of his amazement over the wonders of Delta's Burns Bog.

"It's bloody fantastic," he said.

Bellamy, a PhD, botanist, ecologist, author and broadcaster, spent three days in Delta. The highlight of his stay was a tour of the 10,000-acre bog Sunday.

"You've got one of the most intact bogs in the world," said the internationally-renowned scientist. The bog man, as he is affectionately known, said if Delta's bog was in Europe it would be protected.

"The world should know about this place."

Bellamy is confounded that more people, especially high profile individuals like David Suzuki, whom he knows personally, and groups such as Greenpeace aren't more vocal about protecting the bog.

"This is a precious place," he said, shaking his head.

The ancient bog — it's been around since the ice age — is a reservoir of clean air that locks in ozone-generating carbon-dioxide more efficiently than any forest, he said.

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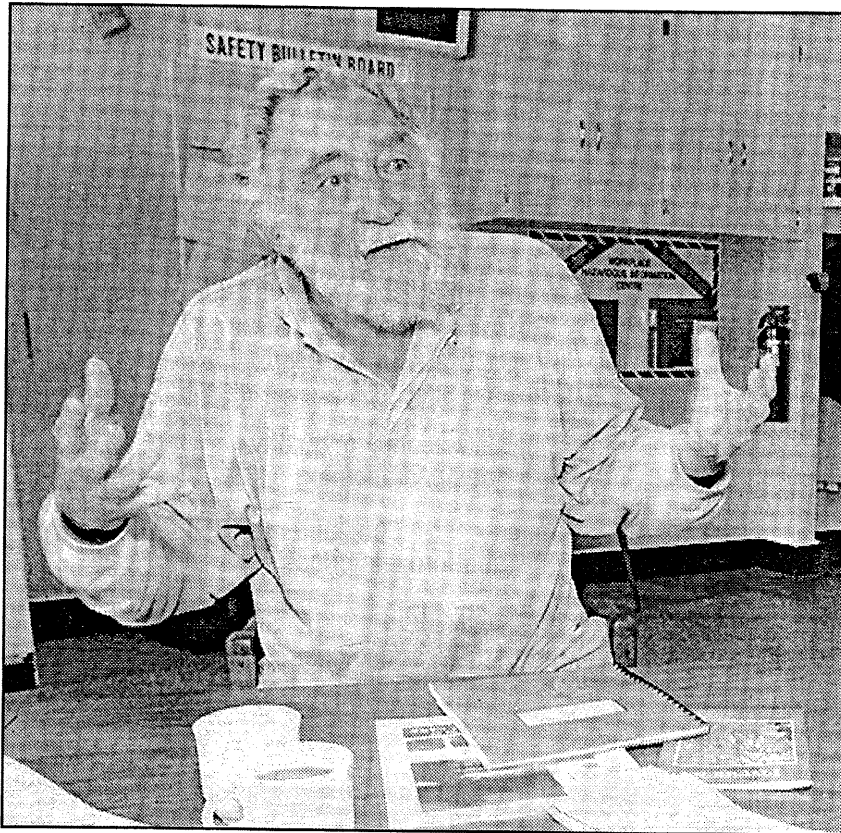
This bog, he said, is unique because of its speedy powers of regeneration. Bellamy swam in one of the many pools in the bog created by peat mining and was surprised to see brown sphagnum moss growing around its edges. He assumed it was an untouched area, but people from the Burns Bog Conservation Society, on

tour with him, assured Bellamy the area had been mined 30 years earlier.

Bellamy spoke to the Optimist before he stopped for an unscheduled visit with a group of primary school children from Annieville elementary. Last week, a group of students wrote letters to the government, urging it to preserve the bog. Bellamy thanked the kids for their work and informed them he would take their message to people he meets on his travels around the world.

Bellamy, who has done over 600 television shows on bogs and other environmental issues, is in high demand worldwide.

He flew out of Delta, headed for England where he will stay for two days. From there, he will go to the U.S. to consult with corporate giant Dow Chemical on a project to create a man-made bog.



A demonstrative Dr. David Bellamy shows his support for Burns Bog. The international expert was in Delta for three days, including a speaking engagement last Saturday at a Burns Bog Conservation Society dinner. Photo by Trevor Rate

Then he's off to Africa to help remove 1,500 elephants from one country to be re-populated in another country. Last year, he spent a total of 31 days at home in England.

Bellamy realizes his comments about Burns Bog will sound antagonistic to the other side, namely Western Delta Lands,

which owns nearly 6,000 acres of the bog, but he is resigned to the role.

"I've been spit on, urinated on and thrown in prison," he said.

Bellamy is willing to endure those inconveniences if it means his grandchildren will be able to visit bogs worldwide, especially in Delta.