

# Champions for the ducks

By Duncan Morrison

**B**ILL TURNBULL AND FRED MANNIX HAVE ANSWERED THE CALL OF Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) before. In fact, the two Calgary-based duck hunting pals and longtime friends have helped the DUC cause so many times over the years that they should be a

full time addition to the organization's speed dial system from here on in.

Once again, the benevolent pair showcased their commitment to the ducks by hosting and organizing the Les Shaw Memorial Dinner June 6, 2007, at Calgary's Chinook Downs. The gala event was attended by 24 dinner attendees – many who had attended the previous three DUC dinners at Chinook Downs over the last decade as well as some new faces from Ontario and British Columbia – raising \$1.5 million, the largest single event in terms of funds raised in DUC history.

"Fred and I first really got to know Les when we were getting our plans in place for our Eaglesham hunting camp in Alberta's Peace country," says Turnbull, who handled the master of ceremony duties for the evening. "Les became a DUC life sponsor in 1995 by donating to our first Chinook Downs sponsor dinner. The loss of Les is a tremendous void, not only in the business forum, but in the way that Les's passion for waterfowling aligned with the fondness so many of us share for waterfowl hunting. This event took about four months of solid effort to pull together, but at the end of the day, the response of the 24 dinner attendees in showing their deep respect and complete admiration for Les is nothing short of humbling."

The funds raised through the Shaw dinner will be directed towards the *Wetlands for Tomorrow* campaign and used for habitat enhancement, education, and project operation and maintenance costs in Alberta's Peace River country, as well as research

initiatives in Ontario. However, besides wanting to pay tribute to a waterfowling comrade, it was the call of the *Wetlands for Tomorrow* campaign, the largest conservation fundraising campaign in the history of North America, that motivated the pair. The campaign, which spans three countries



**Bill Turnbull (left) and Fred Mannix, event organizers of four DUC dinners in the last decade including the recent Les Shaw Memorial Dinner at Chinook Downs in Calgary, are challenging DUC volunteer chapters to follow their successful template for the *Wetlands for Tomorrow* campaign.**

as DUC works alongside Ducks Unlimited Inc. and Ducks Unlimited Mexico to meet continental conservation goals, perked Turnbull and Mannix's ears and prompted the Shaw dinner. The end result, says Turnbull, was a fulfilling evening that educated all about DUC while providing invaluable financial support to the organization. Given the positive results from their successful event, Turnbull says he is surprised and a little disappointed that more senior volunteer groups across Canada are not using their template.

"The frustration to us is that some of the other regions of the country are not

picking up on our template and bringing events such as these to their region," he explains. "What we do is invite people that we know care about our wetlands and wildlife and give them a first-class evening. But the real key to what we do is two-fold. Firstly, we provide an overview and education of DUC, and then we provide a 'show me' aspect of the event where we take members of the group out at later dates and show them wetlands and waterfowl up close. This seals the deal for many of the invitees. There is a huge stewardship

role in bringing major donors on board. But the tighter you steward, the more information you provide, the bigger they tend to give."

Mannix, a lifelong believer in mentoring, thinks the template can be a surefire winner for the continental *Wetlands for Tomorrow* campaign.

"Once you open their eyes and get them on track, they see the mindset and they come on board," Mannix predicts. ✖

For more information on DUC's *Wetlands for Tomorrow* campaign, visit our website at [www.ducks.ca/aboutduc/how/](http://www.ducks.ca/aboutduc/how/).

