



Louise Labarre

GRANBY, QUEBEC

**Intern, Marine Bird Conservation,
Harrington Harbour & Lourdes-
de-Blanc-Sablon, Quebec, 1986, 1987,
1988 Dreambird Teacher's Guide, 1989
Citizen's Guide to Marine
Conservation, St. Barthelemy, Leeward
Islands, Lesser Antilles, 1989
French Family Camp, Terra Nova
National Park, Newfoundland, 1989
SPLASH '89 Workshop, St. John's,
Newfoundland, 1989
QLF Alumni Congress, Budapest,
Hungary, 2006**



Louise Labarre with Barn Owl, Granby Zoo, Granby, Québec, 2020

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LOUISE LABARRE

First serving as as a QLF Intern on the Marine Bird Project and now serving as an Educator and Biologist at the Granby Zoo, Louise has a passion for both animals and the environment. She still remains deeply connected to QLF, saying: "I'm really surprised that after... many years... I'm still very much attached to and I feel like a part of QLF".

An Environmental Interpreter ~

When asked for memories of her time with QLF, Louise Labarre laughs and asks, "Do you have two hours?" A long-time animal advocate, initially an aspiring veterinarian, Louise has worked at the Granby Zoo for the past thirty years as a Biologist and Educator. Environmental education and interpreting nature for the public have been her passions since her work on QLF's Marine Bird Conservation Project in 1986. As the state of the environment is "getting worse and worse" nowadays, Louise sees "a lot of... potential" in environmental education.

Originally from Montréal, Louise admits that she "had no clue about the Quebec Lower North Shore" before she began her Internship with the Marine Bird Conservation Project directly after graduating from MacDonald College, McGill University with a degree in Environmental Biology. She began working with numerous fishing communities along the almost 400-kilometer coast, Louise witnessed firsthand the positive impact environmental education can have when combined with QLF's community-based approach. Although many of the villages often weren't so friendly to outsiders, QLF's Founder, Bob Bryan, was able to establish strong relationships with many of the villages.

Since the trust was already there, Louise was able to move conservation education forward during her Internship; for example, in Lourdes-de-Blanc-Sablon, in order to inform the community about the dangers of poaching the puffins and decimating the population, she directed a topical play with local children, a tactic she had seen in a former Internship with Parks Canada. Speaking of the play, Louise says: "I thought, at least the parents of the kids will come. But at the end of the summer... [on] the night of the presentation, the community hall was full, with 500 plus [people]. We had to refuse people at the door!" Productions of the play, titled *Dreambird*, continued after Louise left QLF. The success of the play and the positive response from the local people was "a revelation" for Louise, and she has since devoted her life to environmental education.

After her formative experience on the Lower North Shore, Louise worked in Salmonier Nature Park in Newfoundland before returning to QLF to help organize SPLASH 89, a conference on marine issues in partnership with Parks Canada. She later worked with whales and studied coral reef systems in the Caribbean for QLF. "I wanted to be on every project... I wanted to do everything," Louise exclaims.

With a deep passion for nature, Louise wanted to be an environmental interpreter. Her work at Gros Morne National Park, in Newfoundland, and her time with QLF allowed her to explore nature conservation and imbued her with the intrinsic value of connecting with communities through environmental education.



Louise with "Toutoune," Granby Zoo, Granby, Québec, 2010
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LOUISE LABARRE



Louise with lemurs, Granby Zoo, Granby, Grandby Québec, 2014
PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF LOUISE LABARRE

Embracing the Potential of the Granby Zoo ~

When Louise first began her career at the Granby Zoo, she was not a fan of working in a zoo, but she quickly realized the incredible potential it offered for environmental education. Louise has helped the Zoo develop the education department from its nascence, establishing and creating curriculum materials for 15 different children's educational programs as a part of La Zoomobile, the Zoo's outreach programs. Louise enjoys organizing Le Zoo la Nuit, an overnight summer visit for kids. She also cares for the animals she loves, tending to and handling the hedgehogs, hawks, chinchillas, lizards, snakes, owls, and other small animals.

Since her first QLF summer, Louise has drawn on QLF experiences in all her her work, remaining in contact with the organization and participating in events such as the 2006 Alumni Congress.

"I'm really surprised that after... many years with QLF... I'm still very much attached and I feel like part of QLF still... There is some feeling... deeper than just a summer job," she reflects. QLF has had a large impact on her career and passion for environmental education, but it's also the personal connection that has stuck with her. Reminiscing on her work with the Marine Bird Conservation Program, "Twenty years later, I still think that it's time to get ready to go back to see the kids and the seabirds, especially the puffins so close to my heart. That experience has left a piece of my heart on St. Mary's Island, Greenly Island, and Perroquet Island off the Quebec North Shore."