



BERMUDA NATIONAL GALLERY

For immediate release

**Press contact:**

Laura T. Gorham, Director

Tel: 441-295-9428

E-mail: [director@bng.bm](mailto:director@bng.bm)

**BNG presented with rare Roger Tory Petersen original  
watercolour of Bermuda Cahows**

*Hamilton, Bermuda, May 2, 2008* — The Bermuda National Gallery is honoured and delighted to announce that it has been presented with the gift of an original watercolour of Bermuda's rare cahow bird by the renowned American naturalist and artist Roger Tory Peterson.

The gift has been made by Helen B. Wilson of Bellevue, Washington and her late husband Dr. Howard E. Wilson in recognition of retired Bermuda Conservation Officer David Wingate and his conservation efforts on behalf of the cahow.

The painting was officially presented to the BNG this week by Dr. and Mrs. Wilson's son Gregg, himself a member of the education committee of the East Lake, Washington Audubon Society. Also present were David Wingate and George Peterich of the BNG's Collections Committee.

The painting is believed to have been completed in 1952 or 1953. In 1951, Mr. Wingate, then age 15, helped the world famous ornithologist and conservationist Robert Cushman Murphy and Bermudian naturalist Louis S. Mowbray re-discover the cahow, thought extinct since the 1620s. Mr. Wingate dedicated the rest of his life to saving the bird and went on to become the Conservation Officer for the Bermuda Government Parks Department from 1966 until his retirement in 2000.

The Wilsons, keen birders and naturalists, met Mr. Wingate during two trips to the Island in 1977 and were inspired by his plans for the "living museum" at Nonsuch Island. They were not fortunate to see any cahows then, but in 1984 Dr. Wilson saw an advertisement in a birding publication listing several paintings for sale, including cahows by Roger Tory Peterson. By coincidence, the seller, Alison Murphy Conner, turned out to be the

daughter of the late Robert Cushman Murphy.

It is believed the painting, which was used as the frontispiece of *Sea Birds* by James Fisher and R.M. Lockley, published in 1954 may have been commissioned by Mr. Murphy. Roger Tory Peterson (1908-1996), was a naturalist, ornithologist, artist, and educator, and considered one of the founding inspirations for the 20th century environmental movement. He founded the Petersen Field Guide to Birds which now runs to 52 volumes.

Ironically Petersen, who visited Bermuda several times as a lecturer, never saw a live cahow. Mr. Wingate says the painting was done from specimens in the American Museum of Natural History, which accounts for minor anatomical inaccuracies in Petersen's depiction of the bird – such as not fully depicting its 35-inch wingspan, for example.

But he said: “It is wonderful to see this particular cahow ‘come home’. You have to remember that is only recently that you have been able to guarantee seeing a cahow in flight at sea during the daytime and have the photographic technology to capture it. I myself only saw one out on the ocean for the first time 12 years ago.”

Mrs. Wilson, now 75, and unable to make the trip to Bermuda, wrote: “Due to our friendship with David, we planned to ultimately donate the painting to the Bermuda National Gallery to be displayed as part of Bermuda's natural history.”

Gregg Wilson said: “It means a lot to our family to know that the cahow is ‘back home’. My parents were very touched by David's work and it has been very special to me to see the heartfelt reaction by people to the painting.”

Director of the BNG, Laura Gorham said: “On behalf of the Chairman and Trustees, I am honoured to receive this wonderful donation. Not only because the cahow is so special to Bermuda but because it is such a fine example of the work of one of the world's great artists of birdlife.

“We are sure that it will be greatly appreciated by visitors and residents alike and increase awareness of the amazing work that Mr. Wingate and his successor, Jeremy Madeiros, have done and continue to do to enable the cahow to survive and thrive for generations to come.”

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**Note to editors**

***About the Bermuda National Gallery:***

*Opened in 1992 and located in the City Hall & Arts Centre in Hamilton, the Bermuda National Gallery is both the home of Bermuda's national art collection and the centre of the Island's thriving arts scene. It is the Island's leading art museum with a richly diverse exhibition programme of past and present works by local and international artists that reflects Bermuda's varied artistic heritage and multicultural community. The Bermuda National Gallery is open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. from Monday to Saturday. Admission free.*

*For more details contact Director Laura Gorham on 441-295-9428, [director@bng.bm](mailto:director@bng.bm) or visit [www.bng.bm](http://www.bng.bm).*