



**AGS Distinguished Scientist Award. Gesner Medal 2005
John Calder**

For nearly thirty years, John Calder has played a highly influential role in the geoscience community of Atlantic Canada. Not only has he sustained a world-class research program addressing diverse aspects of Atlantic coal geology and paleobotany, but he has also made an exceptional contribution to the public understanding of science at many levels. In addition, he has worked tirelessly to develop the conservation and geotourist potential of many parts of Nova Scotia, exhibiting a rare and commendable degree of commitment to local communities.

John Calder is a home-grown geologist, born in the Springhill region of Nova Scotia, and an Earth Science graduate of Saint Mary's University, Halifax (1976). Following temporary positions with Esso and Kerr-Addison Mines, he joined the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources in 1977 to work as a regional coal geologist. Early in his career, he completed a part-time PhD at Dalhousie University, Halifax, graduating in 1991 with a thesis concerning the Late Carboniferous environment and paleoecology of the Springhill Coalfield. Since his doctoral years, John has risen to become an internationally respected coal geologist and paleobotanist.

In 1993, he won a much coveted Research Fellowship at the world-renowned Smithsonian Institute. Subsequently, he has written more than twenty influential papers, and has received many international research awards. Most notably, he is a three-times winner of the Best Paper Award of the Coal Division of the Geological Society of America (1991, 1994 & 2002), of which he has also been President. However, let us be clear - John is no ivory-tower academic. His drive for scientific excellence is matched only by his passion to communicate science. In an era when governments are questioning resource allocation to the natural sciences, the geoscience community really needs people like John. Whether devoting time to tourists on a beach, giving eloquent public lectures, contributing to popular books such as *The Last Billion Years*, or contributing to radio and TV programs such as CBC's *Land and Sea*, John's impact on the public appreciation of geology (and therefore the need to fund it) is simply incalculable. John has worked with many graduate and undergraduate students at NSDNR and through his Adjunct status at Dalhousie, and has also taught a popular class in paleobotany at St. Mary's University. He has worked with many amateur fossil collectors over the years, including widely known collectors Don Reid and Brian Hebert at Joggins, encouraging their enthusiastic study

and assisting with identifying newly discovered fossils. And he has made a strong contribution to museums in the province. John's drive to 'put back' into local community is, perhaps, best expressed in his drive to gain UNESCO World Heritage Status for the Joggins Fossil Cliffs.

In this endeavour, John has contributed great versatility and energy to his work with the local community, whilst winning over provincial and federal politicians. This year saw the first fruits of John's decade-long labour, as Joggins passed its 'first test' and was placed on Canada's national list of candidate UNESCO sites. Many people have also enjoyed his high quality photographs of geological sites and the more human dimensions of communities in various parts of the world.

The Gesner medal provides John with the recognition for expending much of his energy in the recognition and development of others.