



# *Brier Island Whale and Seabird Cruises*

## *Research Division*

Brier Island is located at the southwestern tip of Nova Scotia amidst some of the most productive waters in the North Atlantic, the Bay of Fundy. Monitoring the marine wildlife (specifically the whales dolphins, porpoises and seabirds) and their habitat is vitally important to the health and protection of this special environment.

Since 1984, Brier Island Whale and Seabird Cruises has taken part in the collection of data on the sightings of cetaceans and seabirds in the lower Bay of Fundy during daily whale watch cruises and dedicated research cruises. These studies are being conducted on the large species of whales which seasonally inhabit the Bay of Fundy. These include the humpback whale, finback whale, sei whale, minke whale, and the endangered north Atlantic right whale.

Our studies are based largely on the ability to recognize individual animals. Natural and acquired markings are photographed and individual whales are thus photo identified or "tagged". These animals are then numbered, catalogued and named. This information is used not only for our local studies but is also contributed to four long term research projects: The North Atlantic Humpback Whale Catalog in conjunction with Allied Whale in Bar Harbor, Maine; The Gulf of Maine Humpback Whale Catalog organized by Provincetown Center for Coastal Studies in Massachusetts; The North Atlantic Finback Whale Catalog, housed by Allied Whale and the North Atlantic Right Whale Catalog at New England Aquarium in Boston, Massachusetts. All data is also contributed to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans who keeps a database on all sightings. These collaborative efforts are helping to answer important questions, especially concerning the population sizes and distribution of each species in the western North Atlantic.

By monitoring the returning populations each year, the research division of Brier Island Whale and Seabird Cruises is able to gather information for specific analysis on the local population size, migration, reproductive rates, social behavior, prey species, foraging strategies, and potential life span of these animals. The public education and awareness of these animals and their status is also an important section of our mission