

# Former park warden's new mystery novel based out of CB Highlands National Park

-by Rosie Aucoin-Grace

George Mercer, a former park warden, has just released *Dyed in The Green*, his first novel in a fictional series about national park wardens and their battles to protect our country's special places. This author, who was born and raised in Gander, Newfoundland, worked for more than three decades as a park warden in Canada, including work in six national parks on both east and west coasts, the North and the Rocky Mountains. He retired in 2012, but remains passionate and loyal to protected areas.

Many local residents will remember Mercer when he was based here in Cheticamp from 1985 to 1987. His first novel, set along the world-famous Cabot Trail in Cape Breton Highlands National Park, tells the story of the park wardens' battles with a notorious poacher who has a reputation for letting nothing get in his way and the local communities who view poaching as part of their way of life. Battling egos, greed and corruption, the park wardens are drawn into an intricate game of cat and mouse that takes a turn no one could have imagined.

This work of fiction is full of suspense, captivating you and does not let go. It is like being caught in an undertow. You try to put it down and it pulls you back, as you cannot resist turning the pages and seeing what happens in the next chapter. Set in our very own backyard and although a story of fiction, familiar names and places that originate from our community makes it all that more interesting. During the twists and unexpected turns in the book, at times you can almost feel as if you are right there along with the characters.

I had the opportunity to connect with Mercer and we spoke of what inspired this author to write this mystery novel, "My main inspiration to write the book was a desire to write the eastern equivalent to a book written by Sid Marty called *Men for the Moun-*

*tains*. It was a book that inspired many young people to join the Warden Service and I know my own copy was read and reread many times. That book was great but it was focussed entirely on the Mountain National Parks and emphasized the male role in the Warden Service. I was keen to show an east coast perspective that included both women and men." He continued, "I was born and raised in Newfoundland but after joining Parks, I was very eager to work in as many national parks as I could during my career, and Cape Breton was one stop along the journey."

"Cape Breton was amazing but also presented many challenges with the rampant poaching of deer, moose and salmon in the park, perhaps not unlike what was going on in some of the other parks I worked in, except it seemed to be almost non-stop," said Mercer. He added, "Cape Breton overwhelmed me in many regards because here was this iconic Canadian national park known for the Cabot Trail and the amazing Highlands, yet it had this dark underbelly of poaching that really did have the potential to compromise what the park was established to protect – namely wildlife and wilderness."



We continued on and talked about when he started to think about writing this novel and Mercer expressed, "After leaving Cape Breton, I always felt it was a story that needed to be told and I was determined to write it. The book was written in Jasper many years later then sat for another 15 years while our young family occupied most of our time. As I got closer to retirement, I decided to pull the manuscript out of the closet and work at getting it published. By then, I also had many ideas about turning the book into a series and have actually made a start on each of the other five books I plan to collectively call it the *Dyed in The Green* series." He finished with, *So Dyed In The Green* is the first one and *Wood Buffalo* will be book two in the series. Ultimately my stories will take the reader across Canada and I plan to come full circle and end the series back on the east coast in Newfoundland and Cape Breton, but that is all I'll say!"

Mercer continues to be passionate about parks and protected areas and this passion forms the backdrop for much of his non-fiction writing which can be followed at [writenature.com](http://writenature.com). Links to George's evolving works of fiction and non-fiction can be found at [georgemercer.com](http://georgemercer.com). *Dyed in The Green*, the first of a series of six books, is a fictional account of park wardens who face all sorts of poachers, wildlife and other challenges while on the job throughout the national parks system in Canada.

Just in time for the holidays! For those who would like to purchase this book, you will find copies at Richardson's Printing in Cheticamp, Bear Paw in Inverness and Ed's Books & More in Sydney.



Former Park Warden, author George Mercer, remains passionate and loyal to protected areas of our Country.

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