

**Turtles Celebrate a Safe and Happy New Year:
Nature Trust Saves the McGowan Lake Turtle Sanctuary**

Kempt, N.S. (January 4, 2013) – This new year, endangered Blanding’s turtles Squirt, Lumpy, and Dilly have a 27 hectare-sized reason to celebrate. The Nova Scotia Nature Trust has succeeded in saving some of the best remaining habitat for endangered Blanding’s turtles in Nova Scotia – thanks an outpouring of generous community support.



Photo: Jeffie McNeil

On November 30, the Nature Trust launched a public appeal to help save one of the best remaining refuges for Blanding’s turtles in the province. The property, encompassing 15 islands and forested peninsula on McGowan Lake, southwest Nova Scotia, includes five and a half kilometers of undeveloped shoreline and one of the most critical nesting sites for the endangered turtles.

Project grants from Environment Canada’s Habitat Stewardship Program and the Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund provided critical seed funding for the campaign. Then, in just one month, thanks to many generous individual and corporate donors and foundation grants and pledges, the Nature Trust was able to raise the remaining funds through a public fundraising appeal.

Seeing that the Nature Trust was just shy of reaching its \$224,000 campaign goal shortly before Christmas, TD Bank Group provided the “closing gift” of \$5,000 to ensure this nationally significant endangered species site can be safeguarded, forever.

“TD has been a proud supporter of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust for many years so when we heard their urgent appeal to help save the McGowan Lake Turtle Sanctuary, we had to act,” said Brian Gervais, Senior Vice President, Atlantic Region, TD Bank Group. “Through this and other campaigns, the Nature Trust is playing a critical role in preserving habitats for endangered species across the province.”

Other corporations stepping up to help save the turtles include Scotiabank, Ascenta, AVEDA, and the Imperial Oil Foundation. The Chronicle Herald made the largest donation, with their surprise Christmas gift of \$19,500 for the turtles of McGowan Lake.



In addition, over 300 individuals, young and old, from across Nova Scotia and beyond, donated to help ensure the turtles had a home for the holidays, making this campaign one of the most successful in the Nature Trust's history. Many chose to symbolically "adopt" a turtle for friends and loved ones as a holiday gift, with over 150 people supporting the McGowan Lake turtles this way.

Bonnie Sutherland, Executive Director at the Nature Trust, said the support was overwhelming. "It is heartwarming to know that so many people care so much about the future of this endangered species. Lumpy and Squirt's story touched a lot of people. Now, their habitat will remain wild for future generations of Blanding's turtles and their hatchlings."

The Blanding's turtle is, unfortunately, a turtle in trouble in Canada. With less than 1% of hatchlings surviving, and expanding cottage development and roads in the areas where these turtles live, Blanding's turtles are struggling to survive. As a result, they are listed on both the Canadian and Nova Scotian endangered species lists. Within Nova Scotia, they are only found in one small area – and there are likely only about 350 adult turtles remaining.

Like the other remaining turtle habitats in the province, the McGowan Lake site was at risk because of its high potential for cottage development. Now permanently and legally protected as Nature Trust Conservation Lands, the habitats and species of the McGowan Lake Turtle Sanctuary are safeguarded, in perpetuity.



The Sanctuary becomes part of a growing network of 52 Nature Trust conservation lands, protecting over 6600 acres of coastal wilderness, critical freshwater habitats, old-growth forests, and habitat for species at risk, as well as unique wilderness recreation, nature appreciation, education and research opportunities.

Ms. Sutherland added, "The Nature Trust is incredibly grateful to all those who so generously contributed to the campaign, and who so enthusiastically championed the cause!"

For those still wishing to be a part of the McGowan Lake success story, donations are welcome. Additional funds will help to build a stewardship endowment fund for McGowan Lake, providing critical funds to steward and protect the property, in perpetuity.

For more information, call (902) 425-5263 or visit www.nsnt.ca/savingturtles.