

## Major Coastal Island Protected by the Nature Trust

**Halifax, NS – October 24,** The Nova Scotia Nature Trust has preserved yet another outstanding piece of Canada’s coastal legacy by protecting one of Nova Scotia’s largest and most ecologically important coastal islands. At 530 acres, Borgles Island is highly significant for its unique biodiversity and ancient forests and coastal ecosystems.

At the Nature Trust’s annual gala dinner in Halifax last night, the organization announced it had acquired Borgles Island, a rugged, beautiful and undeveloped island on Nova Scotia’s eastern shore near Ship Harbour. Previously slated for development, the island is now part of the Nature Trust’s 8000 acre protected areas network, set aside for nature, and for future generations of Nova Scotians to enjoy and explore.



“The protection of this island makes an unparalleled contribution to our coastal legacy,” said Bonnie Sutherland, Executive Director of the Nature Trust. “With opportunities to protect large, undisturbed and ecologically diverse coastal islands increasingly rare not just in Nova Scotia, but across the planet, the protection of Borgles Island is a truly momentous conservation achievement.”

Only an hour from Halifax, the island’s untouched white sand beaches and idyllic sheltered coves, dramatic, windswept headlands, and rugged rocky shorelines welcome the intrepid wilderness paddler or sailor.

Virtually unexplored by scientists and ecologists until a Nature Trust exploratory venture to the island two years ago, Borgles is now known to support fascinating, and in fact globally significant ecology and biodiversity. The island features a diverse island ecosystem, with an interconnected mosaic of every coastal habitat found in Nova Scotia, from coastal bogs, barrens and cliffs, to saltmarsh, freshwater wetlands, and even an entire lake-- a rarity on islands.

The boreal forests are in fact rainforest, one of the exciting recent discoveries by Nature Trust scientists. While the harsh climate precludes their development to “old growth” forests, some of the forests are what scientists call “old process forests” which have been virtually undisturbed in over 10,000 years of forest cycles. Similarly, the coastal ecosystems have not been impacted by roads and buildings and stabilizing infrastructure, so are able to evolve and move as coastal ecosystems are designed to do. Globally rare plants and lichens find home on the pristine shores.

Borgles and surrounding islands also provide sanctuary for over 100 species of birds, including boreal forest dwellers such as fox sparrow, boreal chickadee and blackpoll warbler—species whose habitats on the mainland have been highly disturbed and whose nesting numbers are dwindling.

Sutherland noted that scientists and naturalists are excited about the opportunities these islands present. “Because of its “benchmark” forests and coastal ecosystems, Borgles provides us with irreplaceable opportunities for scientific research and the opportunity to discover yet more rare and unusual species. and to better understand truly natural ecosystems, our impacts on the environment, and implications for climate change.”

Like with many coastal gems that we take for granted as always being there for us to enjoy, the incredible biodiversity of Borgles Island was nearly lost, and the public locked out of yet another piece of our treasured coast.

Fortunately, it is now a protected island, one that will benefit all Nova Scotians. It will be left intact for local families who have treasured and stewarded the island for generations. And it will be there for wilderness travelers to explore.

The Nature Trust expressed appreciation for critical seed funding from the Mountain Equipment co-op, Environment Canada’s Ecoaction program, TD’s friends of the Environment Foundation, the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust, and several private donors. With their generous donations and bridge financing, the Nature Trust has protected one of Nova Scotia’s largest and most ecologically significant coastal islands, in perpetuity.

Borgles Island is the 60<sup>th</sup> Nature Trust conservation site, the 30<sup>th</sup> protecting Nova Scotia’s treasured coastal landscapes.





