

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

A Home for the Holidays: The Nature Trust's Gift for Endangered Turtles



Photo credit: Megan Crowley

Kempt, NS (Dec. 20, 2013) – This holiday season the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and some relieved turtle families are celebrating a very special gift – the protection of Bull Moose Meadow Conservation Lands.

The Nature Trust announced today the permanent protection of 75 acres of critical habitat for the endangered Blanding's turtle in Kempt, near Kejimikujik National Park and Historic Site.

Bull Moose Meadow provides important freshwater wetland habitats for the turtles. It is also a key property in the middle of a proposed 2800 acre nature reserve. This large protected area will provide extensive, interconnected habitat and corridors for the turtles and other species at risk including birds, snakes and rare plants. The property is adjacent to previously protected Nature Trust lands at Meadow Brook, and surrounded by Crown lands to the east, west and south. The Crown lands are slated for protection through the Province's 12% protected area commitment. This major nature reserve, a partnership between the Nature Trust and the Province, will provide the first significant protected area for the Pleasant River population of Blandings turtles, one of only three populations in the province. The other two populations are found at Kejimikujik and McGowan Lake, where the Nature Trust also has protected habitat.

The Blanding's turtle is one of the longest-lived and slowest maturing freshwater turtles in Canada. They live up to 80 years and reach maturity at age 20, much like humans. The tiny hatchlings have a survival rate of less than 1%, and with expanding cottage development and roads in the areas where these turtles live, the endangered turtles are struggling to survive.

With less than 500 adult Blanding's left in Nova Scotia, scientists suggest that populations are on the decline and that conservation of critical habitats is key to their survival. Experts on the provincial Recovery Team for Blanding's Turtles cite land conservation as essential in addressing some of the most serious threats to these turtles, ranging from habitat destruction, fragmentation and loss to human-caused mortality.

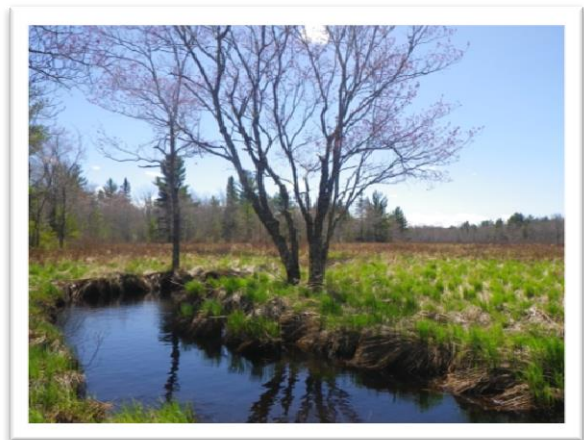


Photo credit: Nova Scotia Nature Trust

Caitlin Porter, Conservation Coordinator with the Nature Trust, was delighted to announce the new turtle sanctuary, stating, “Blanding’s turtles are endangered on a national scale, so our success protecting their critical habitat here in Nova Scotia is essential to their survival in Canada. Even more exciting, the property is highly strategic. It is connected to over 2800 acres of existing and proposed conservation lands. The turtles will be able to move freely between feeding, breeding and overwintering habitats without facing significant risks, particularly from road mortality.”

Key researchers in the area, including Acadia University, Parks Canada and the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute, monitor turtle population trends over time and contribute to stewardship activities that protect the turtles on this and other Nature Trust properties. The Nature Trust will continue to work closely with researchers to better understand the turtles and how best to protect them.



Photo credit: Brennan Caverhill

Brennan Caverhill, a Blanding’s researcher, was pleased to hear of the site’s protection, ““I explored the Pleasant River and Bull Moose Brook wetland systems from 2002 through 2010, and it is one of the most beautiful and bio-diverse ecosystems I have encountered in Nova Scotia. We discovered that Blanding's turtles are abundant throughout its meandering meadows and fens, and nighthawks nest alongside turtles on the rocky outcrops that Nature Trust is protecting. I'm thrilled that this amazing landscape will be preserved forever!”

Part of the Nature Trust’s efforts to protect some of Canada’s most endangered species, Bull Moose Meadow is the 5th conservation site the land trust has protected for Blanding’s turtles. At this same time last year, many Nova Scotians stepped forward to help save the McGowan Lake Turtle Sanctuary, one of the most important breeding sites in the province for these imperiled turtles. “We are delighted to report that a new generation of tiny turtles hatched at the Sanctuary this year,” noted Ms. Porter. “We thank everyone who has helped in these efforts, from donors and grantors to volunteers and our conservation partners. We look forward to seeing many more generations of turtle families enjoying all five sites we have protected to date.”

The protection of Bull Moose Meadow was made possible by grants from Environment Canada’s Habitat Stewardship Program, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Davis Conservation Foundation as well as the ongoing support of the Nature Trust’s friends and supporters.

The public can help to protect places like Bull Moose Meadows and endangered species like the Blanding’s Turtle by making a charitable donation to the Nature Trust. “If you are looking for that perfect gift for the nature lover on your list, it is not too late for purchase a Gift of Nature (www.nsnt.ca). You can symbolically adopt a turtle, frog or bird, or an acre of coast, forest or fresh water habitat and support the Nature Trust’s conservation efforts. Gifts of Nature make a perfect gift for the holiday season, birthdays, weddings, and any special occasion.” said Lisa Doucette-Tasse, Director of Fund Development for the Nature Trust.

Bull Moose Meadow adds to the growing network of 62 Nature Trust conservation lands, protecting over 8000 acres of coastal wilderness, freshwater habitats, old growth forests, and habitat for species at risk, as well as unique wilderness recreation, nature appreciation, education and research opportunities. As with all Nature Trust properties, Bull Moose Meadow will be protected in perpetuity for the benefit of generations to come (turtles and people too!), through ongoing monitoring and stewardship in cooperation with conservation partners and enthusiastic volunteers.



Photo Credit: Brennan Caverhill

Bull Moose Meadow Conservation Lands

