

## **Nova Scotians give Rare Turtles a home: Barren Meadow Sanctuary Protected!**

[Halifax] December 21, 2016 – This holiday season, and for many holidays to come, the rare turtles Wink and Atahualpa and their friends will have a home. Thanks to the generous outpouring of support from individuals across the province, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust has secured protection of the Barren Meadow Turtle Sanctuary.

Three weeks ago, the Nature Trust launched a public appeal to help save a critical sanctuary for the endangered Blanding's Turtles. The appeal received an overwhelming response, including several major gifts, and within a week the Nature Trust secured the funds it needed to purchase the property.

The Nature Trust is grateful to all the individuals who stepped up with donations to help protect the sanctuary. Those gifts are being generously matched by the Marguerite Hubbard Charitable Foundation and the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust.



*Blanding's Turtle hatchling. Photo: Jeffie McNeil*

With the funds in place to purchase the land, further donations are being directed to a stewardship endowment fund which is an essential and critical part of the organization's work. The Nature Trust promises to protect this property forever, and ensuring its ecological integrity requires ongoing monitoring and stewardship.

The Barren Meadow property is located in Lunenburg County and is 36 acres in size. Two branches of Barren Meadow Brook pass through the property before connecting with Pleasant River. The brook is deeply cut, and holds water throughout even the driest summers, ensuring that the turtles can easily forage for food along the side of the brook.

Blanding's Turtles travel great distances away from streams and rivers in search of basking and nesting sites, and this property provides a diversity of habitat types for the turtles. Although mostly forested, the property also includes bogs, the "barrens" that gave the area their name, and unique geological features where bands of rocky outcrops occur in strips throughout the forest. This unusual topography is even visible from an aerial view of the region.

The Barren Meadow sanctuary will build on a growing network of protected Blanding's Turtle habitat in the area. To date, the Nature Trust has protected seven properties near Barren Meadow, encompassing over 270 acres for these endangered turtles. The Barren Meadow site is also surrounded by the proposed Shingle Lake Nature Reserve (pending designation by the Province), which will protect adjoining turtle habitat.



*Adult Blanding's Turtle. Photo: Brennan Caverhill*

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. There are only approximately 350 adult turtles in Nova Scotia, and they are only found in one small area of the southwestern part of the province.

The funds raised to protect this property were matched dollar for dollar with grants from the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust and the Marguerite Hubbard Charitable Foundation. The Nature Trust's endangered species work, including turtle conservation, receives the financial support of the Government of Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program and from Banrock Station.

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. The turtles' story touched a lot of people. Now, their habitat will remain protected for future generations of Blanding's turtles and their hatchlings."

The Barren Meadow Sanctuary becomes part of a growing network of over 85 Nature Trust conservation lands, protecting over 10,000 acres of Nova Scotia's coastal wilderness, critical freshwater habitats, old-growth forests, and habitat for species at risk. The lands also provide unique wilderness recreation, nature appreciation, education and research opportunities.

For those still wishing to be a part of the Barren Meadow success story, charitable donations are welcome. You can donate by giving the Nature Trust a call at 902-425-5263, or visiting [www.nsnt.ca](http://www.nsnt.ca) and clicking on the Donate Now button. You can also donate by symbolically adopt a turtle. Gift of Nature packages are available for pick up until December 23<sup>rd</sup> at noon at our new offices at 81 Prince Albert Rd. in Dartmouth. Please call ahead. Alternatively, your Gift of Nature package can be mailed to you in the New Year.

All funds raised will help to build the stewardship endowment fund for Barren Meadow, which is critical for protecting the property, in perpetuity.

**For more information or to donate, call (902) 425-LAND or visit [www.nsnt.ca/savingturtles](http://www.nsnt.ca/savingturtles).**



*Barren Meadow. Photo: John Paterson*