

Natural Landscapes

The Newsletter of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust

Volume 5, Number 3, Autumn 1999

Nature Trust to Acquire Spectacular Cape Breton Headland

A significant piece of Cape Breton's natural legacy, Yellow Head in Aspy Bay, is being preserved in perpetuity by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. The owners of the property, Walter and Elizabeth Kauzman, acquired this beautiful coastal headland several years ago, committed to preventing development or destruction of the natural values of the site. After learning about the Nature Trust, and finding the organization's mission and land stewardship approaches to match their own intentions for the property, the owners decided to donate the land to the Nature Trust so that it could be protected in perpetuity as a nature reserve.

The 40 acre headland is spectacularly scenic. It includes a beautiful and rugged headland, with a barrier beach as well as a pond and woodlands. The protection of this site is particularly significant as our coastlines face increasing residential, recreational and tourism development pressure.



A celebration of this donation was held on August 30th at the Bras d'Or Yacht Club in Baddeck, where the donors were presented with a commemorative plaque in recognition of their generous contribution to conservation. At the ceremony Nature Trust President Rob McLeave noted that while change is one of the constants of modern society, the Nature Trust will continue to identify and "safeguard important properties such as Yellow Head as a legacy for generations to come".

Field work on the property has recently been completed by Nature Trust staff, so that a baseline study of ecological attributes can be completed. This baseline data will allow future monitoring efforts to detect any significant changes that occur on the property, either as a result of natural environmental change, or in response to human actions.

The Nature Trust would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the Kauzmans for their generous contribution.

Lands & Legacies Update

Projects Focus on Old Forests, Coastal Plain Flora and Piping Plover Habitat

Work on the Lands and Legacies Program (Natural Landscapes, Vol. 5, No. 2) has continued to progress, as members of the project team, Minga O'Brien, Karen Potter and Donald Sam, enjoyed a busy summer traveling the province, visiting and educating landowners of provincially significant properties. Their work took them from Cape Breton, exploring old pine and hemlock forests along the North Shore, to the lakes and rivers of southwest Nova Scotia. In total, over 100 landowners were contacted in 10 provincially significant natural sites. It was encouraging to see many landowners show interest in conservation, and enter into voluntary stewardship agreements. Some landowners are considering more permanent protection options. As the summer projects are being concluded, a new project has been initiated, aimed at contacting landowners of old growth forests in the province.

This summer, a new pilot project focused on piping plovers was added to our land conservation efforts. This project led us to the white sand beaches of Cape Sable Island, where we visited with landowners of provincially significant nesting beaches of the piping plover, known as The Hawk and South Side Beaches. Most of the landowners on these beaches were aware of the piping plovers, due to signage and fences protecting nests put up by the Department of Natural Resources. During the visits the project team helped landowners understand that they are owners of critical habitat for this endangered species, and encouraged them to continue to be responsible land stewards. Options for preserving plover habitat were discussed, such as stewardship agreements, conservation easements, and donation or sale of land. Landowners were also provided with an overview of the

Nature Trust's mission, conservation tools and specific land protection projects. The landowners were supportive of our efforts, and eight landowners agreed to enter into voluntary stewardship agreements. Most of the landowners wished to keep in touch, by receiving with our landowner newsletter to keep informed of the status of the piping plover.

Based on the results of this pilot project we hope to continue the piping plover project next year to include the many other important nesting beaches in the province. Thank you to the Canadian Wildlife Service, for the financial support of this pilot project.

For more information on the piping plover: www.ns.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/index.html



Christmas Ideas for Nature Lovers

Nova Scotia Nature Trust environmentally friendly travel mugs made from recycled plastic only \$6.50.



Full-colour Sacred Worth Art Exhibition Catalogues, featuring the story behind Alice Reed's exquisite watercolours of Nova Scotia's 31 designated wilderness areas. Foreword by Prince Philip and introduction by Alex Colville. Only \$2.



Bring conservation success stories to a friend through a complementary Nature Trust membership for only \$25 or \$15 for a student or \$40 for a family.

Show your friends and family you care about protecting Nova Scotia's special places by purchasing an acre of Nova Scotia! Your friends or family will receive a beautiful "Nature Guardian" certificate.

Second Annual Dinner and Silent Auction



Nature Trust President Rob McCleave With Stuart McLean

On October 15, the Nature Trust held its Second Annual Dinner and Silent Auction fundraiser at the Halifax Sheraton. The event was attended by approximately 250 people who enjoyed a fine evening of dining, entertainment, and friendly competition at the auction table, while helping to support the conservation work of the Nature Trust.

The evening's entertainment was provided by writer and CBC broadcaster, Stuart McLean. Before reading two of his humorous stories, Mr. McLean lauded the work of the Nature Trust and thanked the attendees for supporting this critical work. Then, with reference to the recent Nature Trust Birdathon, and to the presence in the audience of several members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society, Mr. McLean read his hilarious story "Bird", which tells of the lengths to which some birders will go to "tick off" those annual oddities, even if they are found in some unsuspecting citizen's backyard! After the audience had a chance to recover from the laughter, and Nature Trust President Rob McCleave had an opportunity to incite more action around the auction

table, Mr. McLean read a second story with an animal theme, this time of the feline variety. It too had many people chuckling with laughter.

As was the case last year, the auction benefitted from the generous contributions of the many donors and purchasers. There were a wide variety of items donated, including a trip for two to Iceland, several bottles of fine wine, a pesticide-free Christmas tree, whale-watching and kayaking excursions, symphony and theatre tickets, and several limited edition art prints. There was spirited competition for a number of the items, and at least one generous supporter went home with more than a handful of treasures. The Nature Trust would once again like to thank all those people who contributed items, and all those who attended the event and helped make it a big success. We look forward to seeing you all again next year!

Thanks also to our major sponsors of this event: Sable Offshore Energy Incorporated, YMG Capital Management Inc., and Acuity Funds Ltd.



Guests Examining the Many Interesting Items Around the Auction Table

PROTECTING PLANTS WITH LANDOWNERS IN TUSKET AND DIGBY NECK

NATIONALLY RARE PLANTS BEING MONITORED
BY LOCAL LANDOWNERS AND CITIZENS

Donald Sam

The Nature Trust organised two guided walks in August to showcase southwestern Nova Scotia's rare coastal plain flora. The walks, held at Gillfillan Lake and on Digby Neck, offered the public an opportunity to learn about sensitive habitats and see some nationally rare plants.

Southwestern Nova Scotia is the best place in Canada to find many species of this group of plants. The gently sloping cobble lakeshores of many local lakes, such as Wilson's, Bennetts, and Gillfillan and wet areas on Digby Neck offer favourable conditions for these plants. However, activities such as lakeshore development, beach clearing, ATV riding along lakeshores, construction of water control structures, and illegal dumping threaten the survival of these distinctive lakeshore flowers.

On August 14, an enthusiastic group met at Gillfillan Lake to get a first hand look at some of the lake's unique plants. The walk, hosted by local naturalist Carol Jacquard of the Tuskent River Environmental Protection Association (TREPA), highlighted the coastal plain flora, many species of which are designated as species at risk within Canada.

Carol guided the group through a conserved property owned and managed by TREPA. Plymouth gentian, one of the species at risk, greeted the hikers when they arrived at the water's edge. Though past their prime due to the unusually warm summer, the remaining clusters of gentians still managed to brighten the shoreline with their pink flowers. Other notable coastal plain plants on show included Virginia meadow-



Coastal Plain Stewards Attending Workshop at Gillfillan Lake
L-R: Lillian Perry, Joanna Newell, Judy Frotten, Roland Frotten

beauty, Panic grass, Golden pert and Dwarf chain fern.

Pointing to a bare patch along the shoreline, Carol led the group to a former ATV route. "Things are improving here," said Carol. "Since we established the nature area, ATV use is down and the plant population is increasing. This is now the second best site in Canada for Plymouth gentian. We counted five thousand this year, that's up a thousand from last year."

Several wetlands along Digby Neck, in particular the fens, harbour several nationally rare plants, including Golden crest, another coastal plain species. The area's local population of Golden crest is distinctive in that it is one of the few, perhaps only, known population to occur in fen habitat. Golden crest normally occurs only along lakeshores, as it indeed does in other parts of southwest Nova Scotia.

Ginny Proulx of the Annapolis Field Naturalists guided a plant walk on Digby Neck the following week on August 21. Ginny has a wealth of experience and insights on plant conservation. For many years, she has been active in monitoring plants in the Digby area. After briefing participants on the fragility of the habitat, Ginny gingerly took the group through a boggy area and pointed out the unusual species as well as many common ones. The walk was so interesting that not one person complained about getting wet feet!

This group also got a chance to see a community of the rare Golden crest. "They're not the prettiest plants, and not likely to attract a lot of attention," Ginny declared. Later, she proudly showed the group a basket of plants that she referred to as her "babies". Being totally enthralled by this plant, Ginny collected seeds and mud and concocted her own backyard experiment in

an attempt to figure out how Golden crest develops and reproduces. After painstakingly tending to her seeds, she reared several trays of seedlings!

Following both hikes, staff from the Nature Trust instructed interested landowners in how to monitor rare plants on their own properties. The Nature Trust's recently launched "Coastal Plain Stewards" project, scheduled to run until the end of 2000, encourages landowners on key lakes to monitor the status of rare plant populations on their property. Staff handed out monitoring kits to participants, honed plant identification skills, and demonstrated techniques for recording field observations.

All monitors quickly felt at ease with completing the monitoring procedures and appeared eager to begin documenting the plants on their own properties. "It feels great to be able to recognise the rare plants on my beach," said one landowner, following the demonstration session. Another added, "I feel honoured to have these plants in my backyard, and I'm going to do my best to make sure they have a place to grow."

Information generated by the project is used to conserve the region's unique coastal plain flora and foster local support for plant conservation. The Nature Trust participates on the provincial team overseeing the conservation of coastal plain flora in Nova Scotia. The Coastal Plain Stewards project is a firm step forward in the protection of this group of plants in Nova Scotia.

Participants are now monitoring plants on Gillfillan, Wilson's, Bennetts, Barrington and Pretty Mary Lakes, and on Digby Neck. A total of 18 monitors are active in the project, and there are opportunities for many more to become involved! The Nova Scotia Nature Trust is seeking additional monitors for these lakes, plus other lakes in the Tusket River watershed. Those interested in joining the project for next year should contact the Nature Trust at 425-5263.

NATURE NOTES: THE AMERICAN MARTEN BY EMMA BOARDMAN

The shy, solitary American marten (*Martes americana*) is one of Nova Scotia's rarest mammals. This animal is native to all the Atlantic provinces, but it was extirpated from mainland Nova Scotia by 1935, mainly because of over-trapping and habitat loss. Today there is only one small remnant native population on Cape Breton Island. A second small population has been established in and around Kejimikujik National Park as a result of a reintroduction program carried out in the 1980s.

Martens are about the size of a housecat and have short legs, bushy tails and pointed faces. Their fur varies in colour from a yellowish buff to a very dark brown. In winter, their coats are darker and they have a bright orange or beige throat patch. A female marten weighs about 650 grams, while a male weighs about one kilogram.

Martens prefer to live in dense, old growth coniferous forests but will live in other types of forest if there is enough food and cover. They require habitat with plenty of undergrowth and fallen trees to provide dens and suitable habitat for prey. Coarse woody debris seems to be important in providing the marten access to prey during periods of heavy snow accumulation.

Martens generally hunt by searching for prey underneath fallen trees and stumps, inside hollow trees and in dense forest vegetation. Their diet consists mainly of small rodents such as mice, voles and shrews, though they will eat whatever they can catch. They will also eat bird eggs, amphibians and berries.

A marten needs to eat the equivalent of three voles per day and must eat regularly to maintain energy levels, as it cannot store much body fat. During the spring and summer, they will hunt at all times of the day, though they are most active at dawn and

dusk. Martens are less active in winter, when they hunt for only a few hours during the warmest part of the day. Occasionally, during very cold and stormy weather, they may stay in their den for several days.

Martens are generally solitary. Both males and females establish home ranges on which they will only tolerate members of the opposite sex. Even males and females spend little time together, associating only during the mating season in July and August.

Young martens, usually two to five per litter, are born in March and April, in a den that is usually located inside a hollow tree. They are raised by the female alone. When they are born, they are blind, deaf and thinly haired, weighing about 28 grams each. Their ears open when they are about 24 days old, and their eyes open when they are about 39 days old. They usually stay with their mother until August or September. Females usually begin to breed in their second year. Martens have been known to live until they are seventeen years old, but because of the many threats that face them in the wild, including predators, food scarcity, and trapping, the average life span of the marten is about five years.

Their preference for old forest habitat suggests that if the marten is to survive and make a comeback in Nova Scotia, the amount of older age forests in the province must increase. Protecting existing old forests, and allowing other protected natural woodlands to develop into old forests will be important elements in any recovery of the marten population. The old forest work of the Nature Trust will contribute to this important goal.



“COUNTING FOR CONSERVATION”: THE TRUST’S FIRST ANNUAL BIRDATHON

Karen Potter

This autumn marked the Nature Trust’s First Annual Birdathon Event which raised \$3400 to help the Nature Trust protect bird habitat! On October 2, the beautiful mild weather and bright sky provided a perfect day for the province-wide Birdathon for all ages. There were teams of birders in the Cape Sable Island area (Team “North”), Annapolis Valley (Acadia University), and Halifax area (Dalhousie University), as well as individual birders throughout the province. Each team solicited sponsors, and spent the day afield trying to count as many birds as possible in

a friendly competition. In the end, the Annapolis Valley Team found the most bird species at 85 while the Dalhousie “A” team came a close second, but raised the most funds.

Thirteen elementary schools in the Halifax area participated in the school Mini-Birdathon, totaling 26 classes of grades 4 to 6. Volunteer “Bird Experts” visited each classroom to present a slide show to help students identify birds and raise awareness about the importance of conserving bird

habitat. The students had two weeks after the classroom presentation to raise funds and work on their birding skills with their teachers. On the day of the Mini-Birdathon, volunteers from the Bird Society of Nova Scotia helped out as leaders for the field trip, which proved to be an exciting outing for the students. This was a very successful event, which raised awareness of bird life and habitat among the students, and provided them with an opportunity to help protect bird habitat in Nova Scotia.

MANY THANKS TO ALL WHO HAVE MADE THIS EVENT POSSIBLE

OUR SPONSORS AT CANADA TRUST

SUPPORT FROM

The Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History and the Nova Scotia Bird Society

THE HARD-WORKING AND MUCH APPRECIATED ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Susan Marsh, Ian McLaren, Mary McLaren, Darlene Stone, Jack Stone, Joan Waldron

THE “BIRDING EXPERTS” WHO HELPED WITH OUR SCHOOL BIRDING PROGRAM

Peter Ackerman, Joan Czapalay, Joyce Purchase, Fred Grieg, Jenny Hagell, Jean Hartley, Barbara Hines, Fulten Lavendar, Ian McLaren, Bernice Moores, Minga O’Brien, Rebecca O’Brien, Karen Potter, Clarence Stevens Sr., Darlene Stone, Jack Stone, Joan Waldron

DONORS OF BIRDATHON PRIZES AND OTHER SUPPORT

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Atlantic Canadian Nature Safaris, Azor Vieneau (for the beautiful bird images used in Birdathon 99), the Book Room, Brier Island Lodge, Brier Island Tours, Canadian Geographic, Can Tel, Chillkoot Pass, Clearwater, Dalhousie University Biology Department (Binoculars) Discovery Centre, Formac Publishing, Freewheeling Adventures, Frog Hollow Books, Peter Goff, Loomis and Toles, Friends of McNabs, Nimbus Books, N.S. Museum of Natural History, Plovers, Ski Martock, Tai Chi Society, Wild Bird Company

AND ALL THE BIRDATHONERS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS PARTICIPATING IN COUNTING FOR CONSERVATION!



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LAST CALL FOR WILDERNESS ON NOVA SCOTIA'S PUBLIC LANDS:

THIS WINTER THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES WILL ANNOUNCE WHERE WILDERNESS WILL BE PROTECTED AS PART OF A LONG-TERM LAND USE PLAN FOR CROWN LANDS

Commentary by Kermit deGooyer

It's called "Integrated Resource Management" or IRM, and there's never been anything like it in Nova Scotia. Over the past few months the Department of Natural Resources has been putting finishing touches on a giant long-term land use plan for Nova Scotia's unprotected Crown lands. The implications for wilderness protection are staggering, as 1.2 million hectares of land (22% of the province), are on the table.

Here's how the process works, at least in theory. DNR has split Nova Scotia into three geographical planning regions. For each region, DNR staff have been assigning every parcel of unprotected Crown land into one of three broad land use categories that will determine their fate. According to the Department "Category 1" lands will "support a wide range of resource uses" – that's bureaucratese for more clearcutting, hauling roads, and other destructive land uses. "Category 2" lands won't be much different; as they too will allow "most land uses", including industrial resource development. Lands designated as "Category 3" will be protected.

After twice missing their own deadlines, DNR is expected to reveal all three regional plans this winter. Public open houses will follow.

Expectations for an impressive slate of new protected area candidates (i.e., Category 3 lands) are running high. Despite designating 31 Wilderness Areas last December, the provincial government is far from fulfilling Nova Scotia's 1992 Endangered Spaces commitment. This commitment obligates

Nova Scotia to protect a "representative sample" of each of the province's natural regions by the year 2000. But according to DNR, only 23 of 80 regions have been protected to a "satisfactory" level. The World Wildlife Fund believes DNR's assessment is too generous, and puts the number at just sixteen.

Clearly the IRM plans will need to fill many of the gaps in Nova Scotia's protected areas network. That means lots of new Wilderness Areas on Crown lands, and several big ones too.

But will IRM deliver? Probably not, unless public pressure forces DNR to recognize the role of public lands beyond supplying wood to pulp and saw mills. The Department has not hid the fact that they are uninterested in using Crown lands in any way that would limit accessibility to industry, despite public's aspirations to the contrary. In June a public opinion survey conducted by the federally-funded Nova Forest Alliance in Stewiacke found that 83% of respondents, all from central Nova Scotia, choose "environmental protection" or "recreation" over "economic activity" as their primary interest for the woods. This result is consistent with other opinion surveys on environmental issues in Atlantic Canada.

But old habits are hard to change. The senior committee overseeing the IRM process does not even have a seat for the government's own Protected Areas staff. The Departments of Tourism and Fisheries are also absent. The regional planning teams that recommend what lands should be

cut and what gets protected, are stacked with foresters. Stakeholders from outside government (i.e., the public) are not permitted to participate in the decision-making. There couldn't be a better recipe to whip up confusion, opposition, and cynicism about IRM.

If the Province balks at using public lands to fulfill provincial wilderness commitments, who will do the job? DNR seems to want that responsibility shifted to private landowners and land trusts. Notwithstanding the impressive accomplishments of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and a few others, it would be ridiculous to put the onus for regional-scale protection on non-profit charities. With a few exceptions, land trusts protect small properties: a couple hundred hectares here, a dozen hectares there. Only the Province has the land base and the mandate to realistically save properties of several thousand hectares in size, in order to meet provincial commitments.

If DNR drops the ball on wilderness protection, will the Province be providing the Nature Trust with multi-million dollar annual grants so that we can purchase the properties next to the ones they could have protected for free?

As anticipation and anxiety over the IRM plans grow, so too does the public's resolve to protect our lands. Worried about the fate of the places they care about most, a number of conservation and community groups are raising their voices. Home-grown proposals to protect Gully Lake in the Cobequid Mountains, Eigg Mountain – James River in Antigonish County, the Herring Cove Backlands, and the 17,000 hectare Ship Harbour Long Lake area on the Eastern

Shore are before the Province for consideration. More are on the way.

The fate of a few high profile sites will raise the spectre of IRM, but only the Province's willingness to overhaul the IRM process and reassess its results will bring about a plan worthy of carrying into the new millennium.

Kermit deGooyer is the Wilderness Coordinator at the Ecology Action Centre, and a Director of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.



D. MacKinnon

Welcome New & Returning Nature Trust Members

Gladys Ascah
 Paula Beckerman
 Rosemary Blair
 Robert Cameron & Julie Towers
 Diana Dalton
 John Dick
 Ron & Janet D'or
 Hardy & Barbara Eshbaugh
 Fred Fountain
 Paul Falvo
 Ken Fram & Family
 Terry Godwin
 Miriam Guptill
 Christine Haag
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 Glendon Light
 Trevor & Rosemary Lloyd
 Karen & Michael Lighstone
 Neal Livingston
 I.P.M. McLeod
 Wolfgang Maass
 Martin & Elizabeth Sovie
 Enid Shaw
 Hal Stevens

Our apologies to members:
 Mr. Oliver Maass
 Mr. James Morrow
 for omitting their names in our members list
 last newsletter

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Natural Landscapes, the newsletter of the Nova Scotia Nature Trust, is published periodically. It aims to keep members updated on Nature Trust projects, issues in private land conservation, and special events, and to provide a forum for readers to discuss relevant topics.

Natural Landscapes depends on the input of readers for content. All are invited to submit articles, notes, letters, commentaries, or important notices. Please send submissions on IBM compatible 3.5" diskettes or paper to:

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<http://chebucto.ns.ca/Environment/NSNT>

JOIN THE NOVA SCOTIA NATURE TRUST

Membership in the Nova Scotia Nature Trust is open to any person or corporation interested in the protection of Nova Scotia's natural beauty and native biological diversity. Members receive the newsletter, *Natural Landscapes*, are entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting, and may participate in the various committees of the Trust. Members also have the satisfaction of knowing that they are making an important contribution to the protection of Nova Scotia's outstanding natural areas.

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