

New Refuge for Globally Declining Shorebirds

HALIFAX, NS (May 10)—In honour of World Migratory Bird Day, we are delighted to announce new conservation lands today, protecting important habitat for migratory shorebirds. The 16 acre coastal property near Port Joli, Queens County was entrusted to us by the Nova Scotia Bird Society Sanctuary Trust. With shorebirds declining globally at an alarming rate, the announcement is exciting news for birds and bird conservation.



Semipalmated Plover. Photo by Jason Dain

The new conservation lands encompass an estuary, a tidally influenced lagoon and extensive tidal flats, providing an ideal feeding area for migratory shorebirds and songbirds. Thousands of birds pass through the area during their annual migration along the “Atlantic Flyway” migratory corridor. The birds’ survival depends on secure feeding



Scott Leslie

Lesser Yellowlegs. Photo by Scott Leslie

sites to refuel during the long and incredible journeys between their breeding grounds and overwintering sites. Among the many species that frequent these rich feeding grounds are species of conservation concern including Black-bellied Plover, Least Sand Piper, Semi-Palmated Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper, Willet, and Lesser Yellowlegs. Greater Yellowlegs, Semi-palmated Plover, Short-billed Dowitcher and White-rumped Sandpiper.

The Nova Scotia Bird Society Sanctuary Trust owned the property, but transferred it to the Nature Trust to ensure the birds and their habitat would be safeguarded and protected, forever. The Bird Society is a truly inspiring and passionate group, so committed to birds and their conservation. We are honoured they have entrusted this very important place for birds to our care, and thank them for this inspiring gift of nature.

The Bird Society is dedicated to birding, bird education and conservation. Over the years, members donated land to the Society out of their passion and concerns for birds. In time they recognized that owning and managing land was not really the Society’s mandate, and that it required specific expertise and resources. In 2016, the Society decided to entrust their lands to an organization that could ensure the lands would be effectively monitored and protected, in perpetuity. They chose the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.

The Bird Society transferred their bird sanctuaries—seven bird-rich coastal islands across the Province and 200 acres of land at Port Joli, to the Nature Trust. They have now added to that legacy, with the transfer of 16 acres of ecologically rich coastal habitat at Port Joli.

“For almost 65 years, the Nova Scotia Bird Society has been, and is still fortunate in having within its ranks people who care deeply for Nova Scotia. It is evident that the Nova Scotia Nature Trust shares our deep concern for protecting habitat. Our members are confident that the Nature Trust will honour the wishes of the original land donors and ensure these treasured bird refuges endure. We couldn’t be more proud of the relationship struck between our two organizations,” said Dave Currie, President of the Nova Scotia Bird Society.



Dave Currie, President of the Nova Scotia Bird Society

The new conservation lands adjoin the Nature Trust’s existing 200 acre Port Joli conservation lands, and add to a growing assemblage of protected bird habitat in Port Joli harbour, including the adjacent Kejimikujik National Park Seaside to the east, the federally protected Port Joli Migratory Bird Sanctuary to the west, and across the bay, the Thomas Raddall Provincial Park and lands protected by the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

This growing assemblage of protected bird habitat lies within the South Shore Important Bird Area, recognized for its global significance for birds. The area supports 4000-5000 geese annually, about 40% of all wintering Canada Geese in the Atlantic Provinces. During fall migration, over 1000 American Green-winged Teal feed in the shallows. Several diving ducks arrive in late fall and remain in small numbers through the winter including Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Scaups, Scoters and Mergansers. Thousands of American Black Ducks are also attracted to the rich eelgrass beds in the protected inlets.



Hooded Merganser. Photo by Scott Leslie

This newest bird refuge is a fitting celebration of World Migratory Bird Day and an encouraging victory at a time of growing crisis for birds. This year has been declared the Year of the Bird by the Audubon Society, BirdLife International, National Geographic and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, to draw attention to the serious threats facing birds globally. Shorebirds are declining even more rapidly than other birds, with 48% of all shorebirds declining globally and 59% of migratory shorebirds in Canada in decline. Protecting critical habitat is vital to the survival of birds and to long term population recovery.

This important achievement is part of a bird conservation initiative funded by the Government of Canada, the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust and the R. Howard Webster Foundation. Tax deductible donations to support this and other important bird conservation efforts can be made at www.nsnt.ca or by calling the Nature Trust at (902) 425-LAND.

Volunteers are also welcome to help in monitoring and caring for the Port Joli and other Nature Trust Conservation Lands.

We will be celebrating this conservation achievement along with other exciting conservation successes at the Nature Trust's 2018 Conservation Showcase on June 19th at the Museum of Natural History. All are welcome to attend.



View at the new Port Joli Conservation Lands

Port Joli Coastal Land (NSBS) Conservation Context Map

