

Acadian Marshes Natural Area

The *Acadian Marshes - Percival River Salt Marsh Natural Area* is 193 acres located in Alaska, Prince County, Prince Edward Island. The natural area lies along Baptiste Creek and the Percival River. The Mi'kmaq name for Percival Bay is We'kwa-sipu, which means "At the very end of the river, the mouth of the river" (Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, Traditional Use Map).

Acquisition and Legal Status

The *Acadian Marshes - Percival River Salt Marsh Natural Area* was acquired by Island Nature Trust through donation in two parcels. The first parcel of land was donated on April 21st, 1998, and the second was donated on March 8th, 2013. Both properties are protected under the *PEI Natural Areas Protection Act*. The generous donors of these properties wish to remain anonymous.

Landscape Context

The land surrounding the *Acadian Marshes - Percival River Salt Marsh Natural Area* remains largely undeveloped. To the north and west, there is privately-owned forested land in various stages of post-harvest; to the east, is the Percival River; and to the south, is Baptiste Creek. On the eastern side of the Percival River, The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has protected almost 400 acres of salt marsh and forest. At the head of the estuary, closer to highway 2, the Province owns 333 acres in several parcels maintained as woodland with a substantial component of cedar swamp. This undeveloped watershed is a rarity for PEI, with its dense human population. According to NCC, the Percival River has the largest, deepest unbroken stretch of salt marsh in the province, with up to nine feet of organic deposits. The river is used by fishers for harvesting shellfish and for bottom and off-bottom oyster aquaculture.

Plant Community

The parcel that lies on the east side of the Grande Dique Road (the larger parcel) is comprised of several different ecosystem types. The areas that lie adjacent to the Percival River and Baptiste Creek are grass-dominated salt marsh. The forested area of this section is mostly wet woodland, dominated by black spruce, eastern white cedar, white ash and red maple. There are some sections of drier forest as well, which are dominated by red maple, white birch, and balsam fir. Throughout this eastern section, there is a rich shrub understory of ground hemlock, ferns, and honeysuckle.

The parcel that lies on the west side of the Grande Dique Road (the smaller, triangular parcel) is wet forest, dominated by black spruce, balsam fir, red maple, and white birch. This parcel has a rich shrub community of ground hemlock, honeysuckle, wild raisin, ferns, rhodora, and rose. Throughout this western parcel, there are patches of clubspur orchid (*Platanthera clavellata*), which is ranked as S3, or vulnerable, in the province.



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Wildlife Community

In 2017 and 2018, the *Acadian Marshes - Percival River Salt Marsh Natural Area*, was included in Island Nature Trust's Forest Bird Program. Over two field seasons, six point count locations were established to determine the bird community using the natural area. In both 2017 and 2018, common loons were detected during surveys. Interestingly, there is only one location on PEI where loons are known to nest, in DeRoche Pond (central north shore, far removed from this location). Our surveys suggest that there could be more pairs on the Island, including one occupying the Percival River. Other notable wildlife heard or observed using the natural area include Swainson's thrush, ruby-throated hummingbird, winter wren, magnolia warbler, common yellowthroat, swamp sparrow, eastern wood-pewee (a species of Special Concern), and Canada warbler (a Threatened species).

Access

The *Acadian Marshes - Percival River Salt Marsh Natural Area* does not have any marked trails, so anyone accessing the area should use a GPS unit or map and compass to navigate. To access the property, turn onto the Beaton Road (Route 138) from Highway 2 in West Devon. Travel south on this road for approximately 7 km. Turn left onto Grande Digue Road, and the northern property boundary is located approximately a kilometer down the road. Please note that the Grande Digue Road is not paved and can be quite muddy in the spring; most often, it is not navigable by car. The small bridge that crosses Baptiste Creek (located beyond our property boundary, locally known as the Iron Bridge) is not safe to cross by vehicle and Grand Digue Rd. no longer connects to Brae Rd. as it eroded away along the coastline.



The *Acadian Marshes Natural Area* is represented in green.