



Barbara P Parsons Natural Area

The *Barbara P. Parsons Natural Area* is 125 acres located in Bangor, Kings County, Prince Edward Island. The natural area encompasses a managed grassland, a regenerating forest, and 460 metres of river frontage on the beautiful Morell River. The Mi'kmaq name for Morell River is Puku'samkek Sipu, which means “at the place, in the river where there are plenty of clams in the sand” (Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, Traditional Use Map).

Acquisition and Legal Status

The *Barbara P. Parsons Natural Area* was generously donated to Island Nature Trust in November 2012, by James (Jim) and Barbara Munves. Jim and Barbara, originally from New York, traveled and studied extensively abroad before settling in PEI. They shared a passion for caring for wildlife and protecting the environment. This is evident in the fact that Jim and Barbara took on the task of protecting their land even before donating it to Island Nature Trust. The property was protected under the *PEI Natural Areas Protection Act* as two parcels: the first was designated in 2001 and the other in 2008. The Munves were profiled in [Issue 131 \(December 2015\) of the *Island Nature Trust Quarterly*](#).

Landscape Context

The *Barbara P. Parsons Natural Area* is bordered to the east by the Bangor Road (Route 321), to the south by a family farm, to the west by the Morell River, and to the north by provincially-owned protected woodland. Across the Morell River is an additional 112 acres of provincially-owned protected woodland.

The Morell River is the only river on PEI with a legislated 60 meter conservation zone protecting the riparian area on either side for over 25 kilometers. This legislation requires that all development (i.e. change in use of land or buildings, construction, tree-cutting, landscaping, etc.) to take place within the conservation zone requires a permit issued by the Minister of Communities, Land and Environment. All other PEI rivers are protected from surrounding land-use with a legislated 15 meter buffer zone. The *Barbara P. Parsons Natural Area* and Island Nature Trust's *Morell River Riparian Zone Natural Area*, which also borders the Morell River, are important contributions to the connectivity of protected spaces along the Morell River.

Plant Community

There are several different ecosystem types present in the *Barbara P. Parsons Natural Area*. The northeastern portion of the natural area is dominated by grass, with approximately 7 acres being managed for grassland-nesting species. This managed area is mowed and reseeded every 3 years by a local farmer to keep the area in grassland and to deter the growth of shrubs and weedy species which are less favourable for grassland birds. In this area as well is a small pond that was built by the Munves in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada.

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Plant Community Continued

Just west of the managed grassland area is 4 acres of young forest which was established with help from the Macphail Woods Ecological Forestry Project and their Confederation Forest program. In 2014, Macphail Woods received funding to establish three new Acadian forests in each of the three provincial counties. The vision for these ‘Confederation Forests’ is to have them mature into future Acadian forest natural areas, accessible to the public with walking paths, and planted with various species of hardy native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. A sign marking the Confederation Forest is visible from the walking path which leads to the river.

The southeastern portion of the natural area is dominated by red osier dogwood and grass species. This area is quite wet as a result of a seep. Seeps are wet areas that arise where groundwater reaches the Earth’s surface, and are important water sources for many wildlife species. Moving southwest, there is an extensive, dense, white spruce plantation that requires diversification. INT staff and volunteers plan to carry out this work by thinning and planting native hardwood species in future years.

The westernmost section of the natural area is a rich, forested riparian zone bordering the Morell River. This area is a mix of white spruce, larch, and red maple, with an understory of ferns and horsetails. There are several freshwater springs along this section of the natural area which feed into the Morell River and help to keep water temperatures low for cold-water fish species like the Atlantic salmon, a Species of Special Concern in PEI.

Wildlife Community

The *Barbara P. Parsons Natural Area* is home to a rich bird community. The managed grassland supports nesting savannah sparrows and provides hunting grounds for northern harrier. The forested riparian zone provides habitat for cedar waxwing, black-capped chickadee, eastern wood-pewee (a Species of Special Concern), alder flycatcher, hermit thrush, chestnut-sided warbler, and winter wren. Bald eagles are frequent visitors to the river bank as well. The pond is used by several duck species, is a foraging area for tree swallow, and probably also supports frogs. Other wildlife observed using the natural area includes red squirrel and snowshoe hare.

Access

The *Barbara P. Parsons Natural Area* can be accessed from Route 321 in Bangor. From the north end of Bangor Road (just east of the community of Morell), travel south for approximately 7 kilometers. The natural area will be on the right side. A grass driveway is level with the Bangor Road and is used as a walking path to access the property. Coordinates for the grass driveway are: *46.352680, -62.685560*. A rough path travels down the center of the property to the river.

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0.3km

DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, CNES/Airbus DS

The *Barbara P Parsons Natural Area* is represented in green.