



Douglas Natural Area

The *Douglas Natural Area* is 3.6 acres located in Springfield, Prince County, Prince Edward Island. Despite its small size, the *Douglas Natural Area* protects a section of the Wilmot River and is a refuge for wildlife in an area that is used heavily for agriculture.

Acquisition and Legal Status

The land was generously donated through Canada's Ecological Gifts Program, by Alexander and Emily Douglas on November 5th, 1999. The federal EcoGift certification recognizes the significant protection afforded to the Wilmot River headwaters by the riparian forest on the property. The *Douglas Natural Area* was protected under the *PEI Natural Areas Protection Act* on December 22nd 1999, which, together with the EcoGift certification, will ensure it remains as protected riparian forest in perpetuity.

Landscape Context

The property is bordered to the south and west by Boodle Road and Frizzell Lane, an active agricultural field lies along the eastern boundary, and there is an unprotected parcel of forest that lies adjacent to the northern and north-eastern sections of the natural area. Within, the *Douglas Natural Area* has 145 m of frontage on the Wilmot River.

The surrounding area is used largely for commercial agriculture. Intact forest and prominent hedgerows are scarce, and during heavy rains there is significant silt buildup in freshwater systems. Conserving parcels of forested land in riparian zones, such as the *Douglas Natural Area*, helps to protect aquatic habitats by increasing the buffer and mitigating runoff from plowed land and clay roads.

Plant Community

The *Douglas Natural Area* is regenerating land once in agriculture but returned to forest, with many tree species present, including American beech, white pine, willow, eastern hemlock, red oak, and yellow birch. There are trembling aspen snags along the Wilmot River which are frequently used by foraging woodpeckers. Shrub species that can be found in the forest understory of the *Douglas Natural Area* include witch hazel, red-osier dogwood, beaked hazelnut, wild raisin, and serviceberry. Herbaceous plants to watch for in the forested area include nodding trillium, blue bead lily, and wild lily-of-the-valley. In the riparian zone, you will see sensitive fern, and spotted jewelweed.

Unfortunately, there are several invasive species that can be found in this natural area, likely introduced by runoff or contamination from farming equipment. Wild cucumber and Virginia creeper are two invasive species that INT staff are working to eradicate from the natural area, along with a small number of Scots pine. Additional efforts are being made to return this property to old growth Acadian forest through the planting of native trees which will help to diversify the stand and provide seed sources over time.

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Wildlife Community

Despite its small size, the *Douglas Natural Area* boasts a plentiful array of birds, including northern parula, common yellowthroat, red-eyed vireo, belted kingfisher, and downy woodpecker. In the past, there has been a pair of bald eagles nesting along the western border of the property. Snowshoe hare, red fox and red squirrel have also been observed using the natural area.

Access

The main access on this property is an old laneway from Frizzell Lane. Frizzell Lane is a clay, seasonal road that intersects with Highway 2 5.5 km east of Kensington. The laneway is beside an INT natural area sign. There are no trails on this property but, due to the natural area's small size and distinct forest cover, visitors should be able to easily navigate the natural area without the use of GPS or compass. There is no off-road parking.



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200m

DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, CNES/Airbus DS

The *Douglas Natural Area* is represented in green in the map above.