



# Island Nature Trust Quarterly

*Dedicated to the protection of Natural Areas on Prince Edward Island since 1979*

## **Being Thankful, Being Hopeful, Finding Peace**

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As the year 2018 comes to a close, I asked the staff at Island Nature Trust what highlights, successes and learning experiences they will take forward into the new year. These were their responses:

- Our Conservation Guardian Program is enjoying such great support from you, our volunteers, who have boundless enthusiasm and willingness to help in land conservation of PEI natural areas
- The enthusiasm we encounter when we visit landowners who participate in the barn swallow and bobolink program or who stop to chat with us when we are out in the field
- Taking our first steps as an organization towards reconciliation by having all full-time staff and some board members participate in Mi'kmaq Educational Cultural Sessions facilitated by MCPEI
- Seeing the provincial ALUS Program incorporate a delayed hay incentive to protect nesting grassland birds on the Island
- Contributing in a meaningful way to the provincial data on species at risk, through our monitoring of nesting success in piping plover, barn swallow, bobolink and the community of migratory birds in our forests
- Re-evaluating our traditional fundraising initiatives, assessing what works and what doesn't and how we can better align our premier fundraising events with our work
- Seeing the engagement, excitement and professional growth of board and staff

members build and flourish with strategic direction and actions

There is much to be thankful for here: Island Nature Trust acquired and protected 3 new properties this year, our staff gained new skills, our community of supporters grew and nature conservation messages filled the headlines across the country.

There was also sadness as we lost some founding members and environmental advocates. Harry Baglole, who spent a lifetime working to protect natural and cultural heritage in PEI and Jim Munves, an international peace activist and donor of property on the Morell River, will be deeply missed.

With our increasing global awareness comes a growing trepidation – can we turn this ship around, have we passed the tipping point? As we move into a new year, let's strive to focus less on the uncertain future and more on being in the present: doing more to conserve our beautiful Island, doing more to provide a peaceful natural space for Islanders and wildlife, doing more to heal the land. Let's spend our limited time well, not on the things we can't change but on the things we can. There is room for hope and peace.

On behalf of the staff and board of directors at Island Nature Trust, thank you all for your continued support. We hope to serve you in the pursuit of greater, more ambitious and lasting conservation goals in 2019 – our 40th year as an organization!

**- Megan Harris, Executive Director**

# Our Lands

## Riparian Forest Protected in Southeastern PEI

**W**hat does an old forest look like in PEI? Well in the southeastern region where the soils are sandy and the glacial rivers carved deep channels, their high canopy contains eastern hemlock and white pine poking spikey tops out among the mix of sugar maple, yellow birch and sometimes scraggly American beech. In our landscape of mostly young woodland, there is a 70-acre parcel on the shores of the South Pinette River that managed to escape extensive harvesting or development. Now it is protected as natural area forever.



Looking down the South Pinette at the forested boundary of the property. Photo by Hannah van den Heuvel.

Pinette was recognized several decades ago as an area with beautiful old hemlock, but over the years most of these stands were lost to cutting or disease. In this new natural area, hemlock of varying ages lines the steep banks of the river along 750 m of river frontage below the head-of-tide. As the riparian forest merges with upland hardwood forest, the hemlock is replaced by yellow birch, sugar maple and American beech in an excellent example of Acadian or Wapan'ekati Forest. Upland hardwood is the forest type most under-represented in current provincial holdings of protected forest. In an area where cottage development dominates the coastal landscape, this extensive forested ribbon of shore frontage is rare.



A large old hemlock on the Pinette property receives some love from volunteer Rin and our Executive Director, Megan Harris. Photo by Hannah van den Heuvel.

The river below is blanketed on both sides with marsh grasses and used extensively by ducks, geese and mink. The mixed forest canopy of hardwoods and softwoods allows enough light to reach the floor for a lush mix of ferns and shrubs to flourish. In the winter, small mammal tracks criss-cross the property leading often to the river. In the summer, several forest songbirds use the forest canopy to nest and shrub layer to forage, including northern parula, eastern wood-peewee (a Species of Special Concern), and blue-headed vireo.

This acquisition of ecologically sensitive woodland could not have happened without the strong support of our members and donors. We asked and you delivered! Thanks to you, we now own this stunning forest on the banks of the Pinette, soon to be designated as the *Wendell M Profitt Woodland Natural Area*.

# Our Lands

## Forested Wetland Haven For Uncommon Plants in Western PEI

As we gain a better understanding of the ramifications of climate change for our little Island paradise, it is becoming clear how important forested wetlands are as a natural buffer. These ecosystems, once dismissed as wasteland, are protecting us from water and soil loss. Since many were never converted to crop land, they are also hot spots for uncommon native plants, particularly those in western PEI where the soils are a little more alkaline in areas with strong marine geologic influences.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Island Nature Trust has begun to acquire lands in a region that was identified by the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre as supporting many rare native forest plants. To begin, we've purchased a 22-acre forest in the Mt. Pleasant area, and hope to connect more lands to it in the coming year.



Two of PEI's rarest tree species, white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) on the left and black ash (*Fraxinus nigra*) on the right, growing in close proximity in our new Mount Pleasant natural area.



A mature white ash tree that stands in the Mount Pleasant property. Such a large specimen is a rare sight in PEI forests.

This beautiful mature forest contains several stands with varying species makeup. White ash, black ash and sugar maple transition into cedar swamp which in turn transitions into yellow birch, maple and elm. A few rare young ironwood grow slowly under the higher canopy and a survey this past summer uncovered showy lady slipper and white adder's mouth orchids on the forest floor. The latter is just the third record for PEI.

The rich, damp understory of these wet woodlands supports a diverse community of insects, amphibians, songbirds and small mammals. Summer temperatures are cooler in these woods and humidity is high, creating a microclimate that we are beginning to recognize as having great capacity to sustain biodiversity. As we visited in August, newly transformed spring peepers balanced on the tops of ferns as we passed and silver-bordered fritillaries



A Silver-bordered Fritillary (*Boloria selene*) a common butterfly species found throughout the Maritimes.

led our procession into the heart of the woods, reminding us why we set aside these complex and beautiful natural areas in perpetuity.

## Featured Contributor



**Vicki Johnson** was a Piping Plover Technician at INT this past summer. She is a graduate of Holland College's Wildlife Conservation Program and is passionate about conserving our Island wildlife. Vicki will be off for a few months this winter, but will be

back again in the spring to take over from Shannon Mader, who is on maternity leave. You can contact Vicki via email at [plover@islandnaturetrust.ca](mailto:plover@islandnaturetrust.ca)

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**Barb McDonald**, Executive Assistant  
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**Shannon Mader**, Species at Risk Coordinator  
(on maternity leave)

**Leanne Tol**, Farmland Birds Coordinator  
[landbirds@islandnaturetrust.ca](mailto:landbirds@islandnaturetrust.ca)

**Julie-Lynn Zahavich**, Stewardship Coordinator  
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## 2019 Heron Raffle

Dave Broderick of Alberton carved and painted this beautiful Great Blue Heron! Every year, Dave donates a heron for us to raffle and raise funds for natural area protection and stewardship.

Raffle tickets for our heron are \$5 each or 5 for \$20.

The draw will take place at the INT office in Charlottetown on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019.

Tickets are available at the INT office in the Ravenwood building on the Experimental Farm in Charlottetown, or by calling 902-892-7513



You could win this hand-carved and painted Great Blue Heron!

## Partnerships

### PEI National Park and INT Host Species at Risk Youth Contest



Prince Edward Island National Park (PEINP) and Island Nature Trust have partnered on many initiatives in the past, from outreach events to monitoring PEI's piping plover population. Now we are excited to share our most recent partnership - a youth contest centred on species at risk, a topic about which both PEINP and INT are knowledgeable and passionate.

The contest is open to students in grades 7 to 9 or individuals aged 12 to 16 that live in PEI. There is also a group category that school classes or organized youth groups may enter. Participants are asked to create a short public service announcement for PEI residents and visitors about a species at risk of their choice. A PSA is a message delivered with the purpose of educating, and changing peoples' outlook and behaviour towards an issue.

The videos should creatively (1) introduce people to the species, (2) share information about how humans impact the species, and (3) offer ways for people to reduce their impacts on the species at risk. Length of the video is up to the participant, to allow time to present their message in their own way. Projects are to be in the form of a video file, and must clearly state the selected PEI species at risk. Submissions are due on March 15, 2019.

Not sure of what species at risk we have on PEI? Here are a few examples: piping plover, Canada warbler, bobolink, barn swallow, olive-sided flycatcher, little brown bat, Gulf of St. Lawrence aster, and American eel. For a full list of species at risk in PEI, visit the Species at Risk Public Registry at <http://www.registrelep-sararegistry.gc.ca>. For full contest details, please contact Julie-Lynn at [julielynn@islandnaturetrust.ca](mailto:julielynn@islandnaturetrust.ca).

# Volunteer Page

## The Power of Citizen Science

### Citizen science – what is it?

Well, the name says it all – citizens who contribute to science, or more specifically, members of the public that may not have a scientific educational or training background who actively undertake research that leads to discovery and answers questions. The key word here is ‘actively.’ Citizen science is all about getting the public involved, rather than focusing only on education and outreach.

Citizen science can come in many different forms, whether it’s analysing or collecting data, it can provide something for anyone, anywhere. The important thing is that it remains appealing and simple to understand.

There are many citizen science projects globally and they can range from online activities such as classifying photos to playing researcher-created games, or outdoor activities such as bird-watching to photography.

### Why is it important?

Citizen science is a powerful tool that can help us to better understand the world around us on a scale that would otherwise not be possible. It has the benefit of both collecting data on a large scale, and of collecting data over the long-term, which is crucial for picking up trends in the environment. Such information can go a long way in contributing to conservation decisions and policy making.

Citizen science offers all people a chance to participate and contribute to science; it offers the opportunity to learn new things; to put some added value to one’s free time. It can provide an opportunity to get outdoors and collect valuable data for science and conservation.

It's easy to get involved and it's fun!

### Did you know that we have opportunities for you to become a citizen scientist?

Our Farmland Birds and Hummingbirds Programs have tailored materials for easy data collection in the field – right from home. Citizen scientists have been assisting us by recording the date of various breeding events for Barn Swallows, Bobolinks, and Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. This information will contribute to a longer term dataset that will allow us to pick up on any trends that may be affecting the conservation of these species.

Our Piping Plover Guardian and Conservation Guardian Programs also provide something for citizen scientists. While primarily acting as a steward of a particular beach or INT Natural Area, you can also take the opportunity to record the wildlife and plant life that you see during each visit.

**If any of these opportunities appeal to you, do get in touch and we will point you in the right direction!**



Bird watchers can put their observations to use by submitting them online at [eBird.org](http://eBird.org) or to local groups like Nature PEI.

# Island Nature Trust Projects



## 2018 Piping Plover Update

Contributed by Vicki Johnson

As we dig out our generators, fuzzy socks and cozy blankets, our piping plovers (*Charadrius melodus melodus*) are enjoying the beautiful sunny weather on the beaches of southern U.S, Mexico, and the Caribbean. These small shorebirds nest every summer along the Eastern Seaboard and in the Atlantic Canadian provinces. Prince Edward Island was home to 56 individual breeding piping plovers this past summer.

Every year, Island Nature Trust staff monitor breeding piping plover pairs and talk to beach users about how they can minimize their disturbance of these vulnerable birds. A total of 17 breeding pairs were monitored on provincial beaches from April until the end of August. From these 17 breeding pairs, 19 chicks were fledged. We consider a chick fledged once it reaches 20 days old, at which point the chicks are capable of sustaining short flights.

The summer of 2018 was a rollercoaster, weather-wise, for our beloved plovers, with very high spring tides, low temperatures in the beginning of the season, high humidex levels into the latter, and even snow during the first week of June! However, despite these climatic challenges, these resilient birds persisted.

In addition to daily beach visits, Island Nature Trust staff, in partnership with the Canadian Wildlife Service and PEI National Park, conducted their annual Piping Plover census over nine days in June. The census allows for an accurate snapshot of the distribution and population abundance of piping plovers in PEI. This year's census revealed a total of 68 adult piping plovers on PEI beaches, including National Park beaches. That is 20 more adults than were counted in 2018.

The Canadian Wildlife Service completed their final year of banding piping plovers in 2018. The banding study thus far has provided valuable insights into the migration pattern and overwintering distribution of our Atlantic piping plover population. With the use of alpha-numeric flags secured to their legs, our colleagues on the plovers' wintering grounds are able to report back to us with information about specific birds! Now that the banding portion of the study is complete, we will use the next three years to monitor for these coded flags on our local beaches. Be sure to watch our Facebook page for updates about our banded plovers as they make their way back to Prince Edward Island!

While it seems far away now, the early birds start arriving in April. Get in touch if you'd like to learn more about becoming a Piping Plover Guardian. Guardians participate in many aspects of the Plover Program – from collecting data and monitoring pairs to beach cleanups. It's a great way to help a species at risk and enjoy our beautiful beaches!

# Notes & News

## 100 Women Who Care Support Veteran Serenity Areas

On the evening of Tuesday, December 11th, our Executive Director, Megan, made a 5 minute pitch to PEI's 100 Women Who Care Charlottetown group. In her presentation, Megan talked about a concept we have been working to develop the last few years - serenity areas for PEI veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

At Island Nature Trust we work to heal and strengthen both our land and Islanders. As of today, the trust has acquired and protected 3,900 acres of beautiful islands, beaches, ponds, and forests; and we are continuously striving to engage more Islanders in our work through events and our various volunteer programs. We believe that Islanders need to maintain a close connection to nature to maintain their own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

After Megan's presentation, the group voted and decided to award their quarterly meeting's donations to Island Nature Trust in support of our serenity area project.

With this \$18,000, we will be working directly with veterans and their families, friends, and support systems to create spaces within our natural areas that are accessible, safe, and free from any disrupting traffic or technological noises. The first area we hope to create is in our Jenkins Complex Natural Area, which is 500 acres of ponds and forest located just 20 minutes east of Charlottetown in Mount Albion. The Jenkins Complex was donated by the late Harold Jenkins as a refuge for ducks and geese. Now it will be a refuge for our veterans as well.

We have lots of work to do, including installing boardwalks and a walking bridge, and developing and installing signage in preparation for events organized for veterans in the new year. These funds will ensure this work gets done sooner rather than later.

Thank you 100 Women Who Care PEI!

We hope these spaces provide a safe haven for our veterans who have given up so much for us.



Megan accepting a cheque after a successful pitch.  
Photo contributed by 100 Women Who Care.

## Upcoming Nature Events

**Dec 26<sup>th</sup> - The Hillsborough Christmas Bird Count**—There will be a pot-luck after the event for participants at 6 PM. Please contact Dan McAskill at 902-569-4351 or E-mail at [jdmcaskill@pei.sympatico.ca](mailto:jdmcaskill@pei.sympatico.ca) for information or to register.

**Dec 30<sup>th</sup> - The Montague Christmas Bird Count**—Please contact Scott Sinclair at [scsinclair@pei.sympatico.ca](mailto:scsinclair@pei.sympatico.ca) for information or to register.

**Jan 8<sup>th</sup> - A Midsummer Night's Screen: Moths at the Back Door** — Bob Harding will be the guest speaker for Nature PEI's Annual meeting. 7:30 PM at Beaconsfield Carriage House in Charlottetown (corner of Kent & West).

**Jan 12<sup>th</sup> - Nature PEI Event—Winter Birds Around Town** — Join field trip leader, Brendan Kelly, for an outing focused on feeder birds, gulls and waterfowl. Meet at Charlottetown Rural High School parking lot at 8:00 am.

**Feb 5<sup>th</sup> - Nature PEI's Member's Night** — All are welcome to share photography, poetry and maybe even a few natural history tall tales with Nature PEI members. 7:30 PM at Beaconsfield Carriage House in Charlottetown (corner of Kent & West).

**Feb 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Winter Woodlot Tour** — A free annual event presenting management options for wildlife, sustainable commercial use, and outdoor recreation for Islander's private woodlots. This year the event will take place at 18 Strathgartney Rd. 9:00AM to 1:00PM. Hosted by the Wheatley River Improvement Group, Central Queens Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation, and Hunter-Clyde Watershed Group.

**Mar 16<sup>th</sup> - Celebrating PEI's Protected Wetlands in Prince County**— Join INT staff for a presentation on Island wetlands and some of the wildlife you may find there. Stay after the presentation to build nest boxes which will be installed in a nearby wetland. This is a free, family-friendly event. 1:00-3:00 PM at the Dave Biggar Memorial Interpretive Centre just off Highway 2 in Carleton.

**Mar 23<sup>rd</sup> - Celebrating PEI's Protected Wetlands in Queens County** — Join INT staff for a presentation on Island wetlands and some of the wildlife you may find there. Stay after the presentation to build nest boxes which will be installed in a nearby wetland. This is a free, family-friendly event. 1:00-3:00 PM at the Tracadie Cross Community Centre.

## Board of Directors

Island Nature Trust is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors of 12 to 16 members. Each member serves up to two three-year terms.

At the AGM in September, we welcomed two new board members. Jan Matejcek joined us, as well as Gerald MacDougall who will be the Nature PEI representative. As of January 1, 2019 we will also have Keila Miller joining us as the PEI Wildlife Federation representative.

Welcome Jan, Gerald, and Keila! We look forward to working with you!

### Executive:

Judi Allen	President
Laura Kell	Vice-President
Rob MacKay	Treasurer
June Sanderson	Secretary

### Group Representatives:

Linda Berko	Museum and Heritage Foundation
Gerald MacDougall	Nature PEI
Kevin Teather	University of Prince Edward Island
Keila Miller	PEI Wildlife Federation

### Remaining Board Members:

Sharon Clark	Carol Horne
Joyce Dewar	Adam Hood
Jan Matejcek	Michael Walsh

### We are...

Island Nature Trust is a non-profit, private registered charity dedicated to permanent protection of natural areas in Prince Edward Island. We acquire lands through purchase and donation for protection and help private landowners protect their own properties through legislation and promotion of good land management practices. We also protect species-at-risk, restore lands and undertake public nature education.

### Donations are always welcome.

### Contact Us:

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### Find Us Online:

[www.islandnaturetrust.ca](http://www.islandnaturetrust.ca)



@peinaturetrust



Island Nature Trust



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## Your 2019 Membership Is Now Due!

Please take a moment to fill out the form below and return it to the address above with your membership fee. Your membership means Island Nature Trust is stronger. **Thank you for your support!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Category:** Student (\$10) \_\_\_ Single (\$20) \_\_\_ Family (\$25) \_\_\_ Sustaining (\$50) \_\_\_ Active \$100) \_\_\_

Supporting (\$250) \_\_\_ Life (\$500) \_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (Tax receipts will be issued for all donations)

**Payment Method:** Cheque \_\_\_ Money Order \_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_

**Card Number:** \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_