



# ISLAND NATURE TRUST

August 2019  
Issue 145

## Island Nature Trust Quarterly

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

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### Together We Achieve More

There is no doubt that humans have changed the Earth and its life-supporting systems. Through years of rampant development, unchecked pollution and plastic production, we have blindly engineered and are hurtling towards a new, less hospitable, world. It will be a world of extremes - extreme temperatures, weather events, and sea level rise that both humans, and the plants and animals that share this planet, must adapt to or risk extinction.

While we as humans are capable of great destruction, we are also capable of great acts of construction and conservation. Most often these great feats are realized by joining together and achieving much more than we could on our own. Our history is full of great examples of this: the Confederation Bridge, the Trans Canada Trail, Canada's system of national parks. These great accomplishments could not have been achieved by a single person, but required the strength of many. Right now at INT, we also need the strength of many to achieve our goals.

This is INT's 40th anniversary and we have set some lofty goals to celebrate. First, we want to acquire 1,000 new acres this year. Our Executive Director, Megan, has been working tirelessly to help us meet this goal. She has been meeting with potential land donors, compiling property assessments and bioinventories, and completing all the necessary paperwork. All of this hard work means we are well on our way to meeting our goal of 1,000 new acres this year!

Our second goal is to reach 1,000 members. As a membership-driven organization, we rely on annual membership fees to help us carry out our

day-to-day activities. Most of the funds we use to run programs and hire staff are project-based and have restrictions on how we can spend them. Membership fees allow us some flexibility in that there are no restrictions on what we can use them for and there is no onerous reporting process. Membership also has some benefits for our members - they are the first to receive our quarterly newsletter, and this year we are planning a few members-only events, the first of which is a walk to St. Peter's Island on September 6th. Get in touch if you are a member and would like to join us on that walk!

What motivates people to support an organization or cause is something we often ponder. We don't know the answer, and it is different for every person, but we do know that people are more likely to want to protect something if they know and love it. That's why we developed our 2019 Passport to Nature - to give people opportunities to get to know and love our natural areas, with the hope that they will join our cause.

There are still Passport events coming up: a Beach cleanup at Foley's Pond (formerly scheduled for Nail Pond) on August 24th, a joint Anniversary Celebration with Nature PEI at DeRoche Pond (September 14th), and walks along the Percival River (October 19th) and through MacKinnon's Bog (October 26th).

We hope that you will join us for one of these events, get to know what we stand for, and join us as a member as we continue our work to protect pieces of this beautiful, changing planet for future generations to know, love, and enjoy!

**- Julie-Lynn Zahavich, Stewardship Coordinator**

# Supporter Profile



## Danny & Nancy Coffin: Recognizing the Inherent Value in Retaining Wild Spaces to Wander

Is life feeling too rushed, too full, too chaotic lately? Little old PEI seems to be channeling the hum and urgency of a planet in crisis-mode; statistics that describe how we're running out of time to turn the climate ship around are fed to us rapid-fire through all media. What can any one of us do?

Well, you might look to couples like Danny & Nancy Coffin, who decided that the forest they owned should be protected so that it could provide natural services for people and wildlife forever. After discussing it with their three children, they gave it legal protection under the *PEI Natural Areas Protection Act*, and then they went two steps further. They donated it to Island Nature Trust, as an Ecological Gift.

The Coffins bought the property in the 1970's because they wanted woodland to explore with their young family. Danny had spent some time in the late 1960's completing stream health surveys in West Prince County. That time walking streams, mapping pools and riffles, culverts and buffer zones, strengthened an appreciation for the land first instilled by his grandmother. And it ignited a dream to own some forest. When his stint as a stream surveyor ended and he began a career in his chosen profession of dentistry, Danny enlisted one of his stream crew mates, Peter Dale, to find him some woodland to purchase. Peter found what is now called the *Dunk River Hardwoods Natural Area* in Springton. In the headwaters of the Dunk River, this 57-acre woodland had the elements Danny was looking for: deep woods and a stream.

During a full life of raising children and careers that took them elsewhere in the Maritimes, the land was a constant and a tie to home in PEI. Danny brought the kids out to explore, although the very large coyote tracks they spotted once kept Nancy from venturing out too often. A son-in-law and friends started to build a few bike trails but found they hadn't enough time to dedicate to this complicated venture and there is little evidence left to indicate they were ever there. In the end, what Danny enjoyed most about this property was having a wild space to go and wander, plant some trees, explore the seasons and escape from the busyness of the built world. It was his family's place to putter and recharge their batteries. Time passes differently when you're in the woods. Small worries seem less important. There is a natural rhythm that pleases the soul.

Dan and Nancy, we can't thank you enough for choosing to protect this land with not just one but three levels of protection: designation under the *PEI Natural Areas Protection Act*, donation to a private land trust (Island Nature Trust), and certification as an Ecological Gift with the Government of Canada. We commit to caring for these woods and stream, for the resident barred owl, the upland hardwood trees and generations of future wanderers.

# Our Lands

## Dunk River Hardwoods Natural Area: A Forest Refuge in an Agricultural Landscape



Stewardship Technician, Iain Crowell, taking in the sights and sounds of the new *Dunk River Hardwoods Natural Area*

The natural and human history of the Dunk River, fourth largest watershed in PEI, was eloquently documented in Kathy Martin's 1981 book "Watershed Red". Most of this once green land was cut, burned and plowed during the 1800's, with the original hardwood forests entirely lost to shipbuilding and settlement for farming. Today, it remains dominated by agriculture and only small pockets of regenerating forest grow, mainly in the headwaters around Springton and Rose Valley, down to Breadalbane. Protecting these remnant woodlands is critical for the health of the river, as it flows all the way to Bedeque Bay.

We are so honoured to accept the gift of 57 acres of mature hardwood forest in Springton, in the headwaters of the Dunk River, from Danny and Nancy Coffin! Walking through the steep terrain provides a window into what the land must have looked and felt like in the 1700's.

A barred owl signals this is its territory and we are visitors that are not entirely welcome. Ovenbirds and red-eyed vireos maintain an almost constant chatter, while less energetic singers like eastern wood peewee and magnolia warbler interject intermittently. A towering canopy of sugar maple, yellow birch, red maple, and eastern hemlock pulls your eyes upward, at the great risk of a turned ankle or bashed knee. The dense cover of hay-scented and other ferns alternating with Canada yew send every footstep into an unseen, ungauged depth to the forest floor. The diversity of understory plants is rich, changing subtly with the elevation down to the stream.



The rich forest understory which will provide excellent nesting and foraging habitat for forest birds

In the final pages of her book, Kathy Martin writes "... although modern economies thrive on uniformity, biological systems are destroyed by it." This forest is a beautiful example of what biodiversity can look like in our Maritime Acadian or Wapane'kati forests. We intend to ensure that the forest here continues to age into something akin to what the Mi'kmaq saw when they harvested shellfish in Eptek (Bedeque Bay) before Europeans arrived on the shore. You can find a summary of this new natural area on our website.

## Island Nature Trust Staff

**Megan Harris**, Executive Director  
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**Barb McDonald**, Executive Assistant  
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**Shannon Mader**, Species-at-Risk Coordinator  
Currently on maternity leave

**Vicki Johnson**, Piping Plover Coordinator,  
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**Leanne Tol**, Farmland Birds Coordinator,  
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**Julie-Lynn Zahavich**, Stewardship Coordinator,  
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## Meet INT's 2019 Summer Staff

At INT, we are very lucky to have some fantastic summer staff on this year, most of whom are returning for a second or third summer. We asked each of them to share a bit about themselves and what they have learned so far this summer.

### **Brendan Kelly, Forest Bird Technician**

Working with INT these past two summers has been very rewarding. Here at INT I have enjoyed participating in the very important work we do to protect natural areas and the species which depend on them. Educating the public, both young and old has been one of the many highlights for me. As well, I have really enjoyed working on our new nesting structures project which provides bird species like the tree swallow a safe place to nest and raise young.



### **Iain Crowell, Land Stewardship Technician**

I am in my third year working for INT, having spent my first summer with the piping plover program, and these past two summers as part of the land stewardship team. My days are oftentimes spent educating kids and adults, although I am always learning myself! Having just completed my Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science at Mt. Allison, this work experience has exposed me to so much of what isn't taught in the classroom. One of the best things about my job is exploring mature forests; my personal favourite is our *Caledonia Forest Natural Area*!



### **Brett MacKinnon, Forest Bird Technician**

I am back for a third season as a Forest Bird Technician with INT. I'm glad to be able to share my passion for wildlife conservation, particularly bird conservation, with volunteers and the general public. Over the past two seasons, I have enjoyed co-leading forest bird walks and meeting with Conservation Guardian volunteers to visit natural areas. In the fall of 2018, I stayed on with INT to build a loon nesting platform, tree swallow boxes and wood duck boxes, and in the spring I helped install these nesting structures in INT natural areas. This summer, I have been part of a team working with the Abegweit Conservation Society to install and monitor autonomous recording units, which are collecting forest bird community data. These data, along with habitat data that we will collect, will allow us to compare bird communities between different habitat types and abiotic habitat features.



### **Tory Hartley-Cox, Piping Plover Technician**

I am a recent graduate from the University of Prince Edward Island with a Bachelor's in Wildlife Conservation. I'm originally from Southern Ontario but have traveled the last four years working as a Wildlife Technician while attending College and University. I have worked on avian research and conservation projects in Nova Scotia, Yukon, New Brunswick, Alberta and South Africa.



# Notes & News

## Improving Nesting Opportunities in INT Wetlands

PEI is home to dozens of cavity-nesting birds. However, only a handful of species, such as woodpeckers, excavate cavities. Most cavity-nesting birds, including wood ducks and tree swallows, have to search for an existing cavity in which to lay their eggs. In an effort to improve nesting opportunities for cavity nesters, this spring, INT installed 4 wood duck and 16 tree swallow nest boxes in 4 of our wetland natural areas across PEI. The nest boxes were a big hit with the birds and most tree swallow boxes were occupied just days after they were installed!

To make our nest boxes as safe as possible for birds, we mounted the boxes on metal poles which we then covered with PVC pipe to stop predators like racoons from climbing up to the boxes. We also added thumb tacks around the entrance hole of each tree swallow box to stop squirrels from chewing their way in. On the inside of all nest boxes we attached a small strip of metal mesh to help the young birds climb out when it comes time to fledge.

This spring, INT also made history by constructing PEI's first loon nesting platform! Last field season, our field technicians noticed a lot of racoon disturbance along the shorelines of DeRoche Pond, the only place where loons are known to nest in PEI. Racoons are notorious for preying on bird nests and love to forage along shorelines (where loons nest). With the construction of a loon nesting platform we hope to provide a safe refuge for loons, away from racoons and aerial predators like eagles. The platform is constructed of 6 foot cedar logs, mud, debris, plants and a metal cage roof to give the loons a fighting chance to successfully nest next spring!



PEI's first loon-nesting platform in action in INT's *DeRoche Pond Natural Area*

## Volunteer Profile



### Bob Butler

Conservation Guardian

Bob Butler is the Conservation Guardian for INT's *Barbara Green Natural Area*, which is located in Tryon and overlooks the Tryon River saltmarsh. Bob lives next door to the natural area and helps us by keeping the walking path that circles the natural area mowed and clear of fallen trees. He also volunteers with the South Shore Watershed Association (SSWA) to lead tours through the natural area and neighbouring lands and lend a hand wherever it's needed. We sat down with Bob recently to ask him more about his background and his experience volunteering with INT.

Bob is a retired teacher, having taught in Saskatchewan for 35 years before returning to PEI with his family to semi-retire. For many years, Bob taught biology, chemistry, and English. He also worked with ambulance services in Saskatchewan as a first responder and emergency medical assistant. When he is not volunteering with INT or SSWA, Bob enjoys geocaching—he has found 20,000 caches so far and is working to install a new series of geocaches in INT's *Jenkins Complex Natural Area* this summer!

Bob became involved with INT by proximity. Having lived next door to Barbara Green, the generous land donor for whom the natural area is named, and having seen the work of INT, he thought he may as well join in and lend a hand. Since 2005, Bob has been walking the Barbara Green Natural Area almost daily. Bob says he enjoys being a Conservation Guardian with INT because it provides a necessary incentive to get out onto the land. Through his work with INT, Bob says he now knows more about INT's work, has met lots of helpful people, and is more aware of INT's network of natural areas that he hopes to explore more of in the future! It's always a pleasure to work with Bob in the field—he has a quick remark or intriguing story ready for any occasion!

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Thank you, Bob, for your commitment to the Conservation Guardian Program!

# Island Nature Trust Projects

## Re-sighting Piping Plovers on PEI Beaches



Piping plover breeding season in PEI is winding down. Since late April, Island Nature Trust staff have been visiting provincial beaches to monitor nesting plovers and record re-sightings of banded birds. These banded birds are part of the 5-year mark-recapture study that was initiated by Environment & Climate Change Canada (ECCC) in 2013. The banding portion of this study was completed in 2018. Now, over the next few years, we will work with conservation partners and volunteers to re-sight and report those flagged individuals.

### **Why do we flag/band Piping Plovers?**

Banding and re-sighting birds allows us to fill gaps in knowledge we have on a species. By collecting data on flagged birds, we learn about their migration routes, location of wintering grounds, nest site fidelity, survival rates, and nest productivity. These data will help ECCC to develop management strategies for recovering the population, not only on the plovers' breeding grounds, but also for their migratory stopovers and wintering grounds!

### **What have we learned so far from banding piping plover?**

The eastern Canada piping plover population is split into two sub-populations: the Gulf of St. Lawrence population and the southern Nova Scotia population. The Gulf population includes plovers observed in New Brunswick, northern Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, PEI, the Magdalen Islands, Newfoundland, and St. Pierre and Miquelon Islands. The southern Nova Scotia population includes piping plovers that use the southern regions of Nova Scotia, from Halifax to Shelburne County. Through re-sighting of banded individuals, ECCC detected a 61% return rate of banded piping plover adults in the Gulf and a 78% return rate of banded adults in southern Nova Scotia. Banded chick return rates were 49% for the Gulf and 38% for southern Nova Scotia. On their wintering grounds, our colleagues down south have re-sighted approximately 65% of all banded adults and 48% of all banded chicks from eastern Canada! We also now know where our PEI birds overwinter—mostly in the Bahamas (lucky plovers)!

If you see a piping plover (banded or un-banded), please report your sighting to Island Nature Trust!

# 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Donors 2019

## Workshops

Andy Henry  
 Fiep de Bie  
 Hon. Diane Griiffin  
 Jackie Waddell & Kevin Laughlin  
 Kathleen & Dave MacNearney  
 Riverdale Orchard  
 Stephen DesRoches  
 Tony Reddin & Marion Copleston

## Donated Items

Anderson's Creek Golf Course  
 Anonymous  
 Arvidson Clay  
 Belvedere Golf Course  
 Birdmouse  
 Brown Barn Mustard  
 Clay Impressions  
 Communities, Land & Environment  
 Confederation Centre of the Arts  
 Dario Zannier  
 Dave Broderick  
 Flinder's Weavery  
 Holman Grand Hotel  
 John Somers  
 Judi Allen & Dave McBurney  
 KKP Charlottetown  
 Lobster on the Wharf  
 Maritime Madness  
 McAskill Woodworking  
 Mike FitzGerald  
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 Paul Gallant  
 Richard Vickerson  
 Sally Blake Hooff  
 Shawn Hill  
 Sporting Intentions  
 The Handpie Company  
 Tourism PEI  
 Tree Top Haven  
 Victoria Playhouse  
 Weaverly Yours  
 Woodland Maple Syrup

Fossil Foray  
 Bird Banding Outing  
 Guided Nature Tour of Bonshaw Hills  
 Maple Syrup Production  
 Guided Mushroom Walk  
 Cidery Tour  
 Nature Photography  
 Guided Canoe Trip for 6 People

2 - Green Fees  
 Fishing Fly Broach  
 Pottery Sanderling on Driftwood  
 2 - Green Fees  
 "Both Sides of the Chicken" Art Piece  
 3 - Bottles of Specialty Mustards  
 Pottery Platter  
 2 - Suites of Fishing Licenses  
 2 - Tickets for "Spinning Yarns & Atlantic Blue"  
 Bird House  
 Hudsonian Godwit & Great Blue Heron Carvings  
 4 - Woven Tea Towels  
 One Night's Stay in a Holman Room  
 Precious Memories Box  
 Cardigan Farmers Basket  
 Printing of Program  
 Dinner for Two  
 Assortment of Hot Sauces  
 Curly Maple Cutting Board  
 2 - Cutting Boards  
 One Night Stay in oTENTik & 2 - Park Day Passes  
 10 Lbs. of Blueberries  
 "The Wood Wagon" Original Watercolour  
 "Thank You, Vanco" Original Watercolour  
 21 - Trout Flies & Box  
 Midori 6-Person Backpacking Tent  
 \$40 Gift Certificate  
 2 - Two Night's Camping Passes  
 One Night Stay in Treepod  
 2 - Tickets  
 Hand Woven Scarf  
 Maple Syrup

# 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Donors 2019

## Cash Donors

Linda Berko  
 Rev. Charlie Cheverie  
 Ruth DeLong  
 Rosemary Dewar  
 Albert Flavell  
 Donna Gill  
 Leigh Jenkins  
 Barb MacDonald & Doug Deacon  
 John Sylvester

## Sponsorships

**Gold:** Cows Inc.  
**Gold:** Murphy Hospitality Group  
**Silver:** Mary Jacobs  
**Silver:** Provincial Credit Union  
**Bronze:** Stewart McKelvey

## Corporate Tables

Fitzpatrick & Company  
 Parks Canada  
 PEI Dept. of Communities, Land & Environment  
 Stantec Consulting Ltd.

**Thank you to the many volunteers who helped us organize our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration! And thank you to those who helped us on the night of—the event could not have happened without your support!**

## 100 Women Who Care Donors

Nancy Allan	Donna Cantwell	Lorraine Dougan
Kelly Allard	Roxanne Carter-Thompson	Stephanie Drake
Judi Allen	Kathleen Casey	Lois Drummond
Kelly Arsenault	Susan Ching	Jennifer Dunn
Nancymarie Arsenault	Janet Clark	Barbara Enman
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Sharon Cameron	Rebecca Deacon	Michelle Harris Genge
Rebecca Campbell	Marilyn DiBenedetto	Florence Harris
Edwena Campbell	Valerie Docherty	Margaret Hayden
Susan Campbell	Kim Dolan	

# 100 Women Who Care Donors

Rosemary Herbert	Christine MacKinnon	Cheryl Picard
Tracy Hill	Patsy MacLean	Jean Pitre
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	Brenda Picard	Jenene Wooldridge

## 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. Board members participate in a number of committees that help guide the work of Island Nature Trust.

### Executive:

Laura Kell	Vice-President & Acting President
Rob MacKay	Treasurer
June Jenkins Sanderson	Secretary

### Group Representatives:

Linda Berko	Museum and Heritage Fdn.
Gerald MacDougall	Nature PEI
Kevin Teather	UPEI Biology Dept.
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, membership-driven, 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 and new members 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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## Time to Take Bird Seed Feeders Down!



Finch with trichomoniasis.  
Photo courtesy of the Canadian  
Wildlife Health Cooperative

It's that time of year again when temperatures rise and infectious diseases like trichomonosis are observed in our local birds. Trichomonosis was first documented in Atlantic Canada in 2007 and is now found on an annual basis in our purple finches and American goldfinches. Other birds, including pigeons, doves and raptors, can also contract trichomonosis.

Areas where birds gather like bird feeders and bird baths allow easy transmission of diseases between individuals. Clinical signs include difficulty swallowing, fluffed up feathers and wet looking plumage around the face and neck. Do our feathered friends a favour and take your bird feeders down until cold temperatures return again in the fall. Please note: hummingbird feeders can remain up but should be cleaned regularly to prevent mould.