



ISLAND NATURE TRUST

February 2020
Issue 147

Island Nature Trust Quarterly

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

Inside this issue:

| | |
|---|----|
| <i>INT's Newest Natural Areas</i> | 2 |
| <i>Natural Areas on the Horizon</i> | 3 |
| <i>Working Together to Monitor Forest Birds</i> | 4 |
| <i>INT's Newest Board Members</i> | 5 |
| <i>Piping Plover Update</i> | 6 |
| <i>Barb McDonald: 37 Years with INT</i> | 7 |
| <i>Our Generous Donors in 2019</i> | 8 |
| <i>A Sneak Peek at 2020</i> | 12 |



Looking Forward to a New Decade at INT

The door is closing on our fortieth anniversary at Island Nature Trust, with less than two months to go until the end of our fiscal year. With your tremendous support, there has been so much to celebrate!

In the 2019 calendar year, Prince Edward Island was second in the country for the number of Ecological Gifts of ecologically sensitive lands. Generous landowners donated 11 Ecogift properties across the Island; six of those were gifts to Island Nature Trust.

In our fortieth year, we set some ambitious targets, knowing our supporters were behind us 100%. Seven properties totaling 408 acres have transferred to INT and six more are close to completion. Our membership has more than doubled and we embarked on new, immersive ways to connect people with nature more often. Our Passport to Nature and expert-led nature workshops were well received, with the resounding message being "please host these again"!

As INT opens the door to a new decade, we are counting on our supporters to walk with us, conserving more land, stewarding the 4,800+ acres we will soon own responsibly, and learning more about our natural areas.

And if you are in a position to help us meet our 1,000-acres or 1,000 new members targets before March 31st, we would be most grateful. Membership is now a snap, with a "Join Now" button added to our website (www.islandnaturetrust.ca). Members have voting privileges, access to members-only



A potential new natural area on the Souris Line Road

activities and advance notice of limited registration events.

Donations are still being accepted for stewardship contributions for new lands, as well as purchase costs for the two spectacular properties profiled on page 3. We accept cash or shares, both of which come with a charitable donation receipt and the latter also exempt from capital gains tax. American taxpayers can now benefit from our grantee status with American Friends of Canadian Conservation to receive a tax receipt that can be put towards their U.S. income tax.

Early in the spring, INT plans a special event for Earth Day 2020, to bid adieu to one decade and welcome the next. Stay tuned and visit often!

- Megan Harris, Executive Director

Our Lands

INT's Newest Natural Areas in Portage, Tenmile House, and Fort Augustus

Since April of last year, Island Nature Trust has been celebrating our 40th anniversary in part by working to acquire and protect 1,000 new acres. In pursuit of that ambitious goal, and with the support of several incredibly generous Islanders, we accepted three Ecological Gifts of land, each larger than 100 acres. These three gifts helped boost the smallest province in Canada to the #2 ranking across the nation in number of Ecological Gifts for 2019!

The first of these impressive new natural areas is next door to INT's existing *Portage Bog Natural Area* and lies just north of the community of Portage in Prince County. This 115-acre bog and forested wetland serves as habitat for bird, small mammal and amphibian life, including several rare bird species, such as Northern waterthrush, ruby-crowned kinglet and the threatened Canada warbler. Canada warbler has seen an estimated 71% population decrease from 1970 to 2012; INT's recent forest bird research confirmed the importance of small forested pocket bogs as nesting habitat for this species and many others. Bog and forested wetland are also very important in sequestering carbon and storing freshwater.

In Tenmile House, the late Carol Connick donated a 116-acre parcel containing an unusual mix of white pine and red oak forest growing adjacent to peatland shrub swamp and open marsh wetland. This interesting combination provides growing conditions for quite a wide number of tree, shrub and herbaceous species. The shrub swamp and open marsh areas support a diverse herpetofaunal community, including spring peeper, wood frog, yellow-spotted salamander, red-bellied snakes and garter snakes.



A section of bog in the new Fort Augustus property, surrounded by forest and a lovely patch of sensitive fern.



A view of one of INT's newest natural areas, located adjacent to our existing *Portage Bog Natural Area*.

The third large parcel donated this year as an Ecological Gift is a 101-acre property with a mixture of softwood forest and farmland bordering the Hillsborough River in Fort Augustus. The Hennessey family has spent the latter half of the 1900's converting this once agricultural land back to forest. Thanks to their efforts, this natural area now contains red pine, a species listed as imperiled by the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre, along with several other vulnerable species of tree.

Large natural areas, such as these, can play a critical role in supporting Island wildlife and in providing the ecosystem services that we rely on. These three parcels of land, along with the other acquisitions this year, have placed our 1,000 acre goal within reach! Please stay tuned for the details of a grand Celebration of Land planned for Earth Day 2020.

Our Lands

Natural Areas on the Horizon

As part of our goal to acquire 1,000 acres this year, we are working towards the purchase of two natural areas: Crown Point, a 118- acre headland property in Alexandra teeming with wildlife; and 109- acres of upland hardwood forest in Lewes, near Caledonia, that would bolster our existing network of natural areas in southeastern PEI.

Crown Point is a unique, culturally and ecologically rich, and highly visible parcel of land near Stratford, PEI. The property provides habitat for several species of concern, including insectivorous bank swallows and water shrews. It also acts as part of a critical shorebird stopover area, sandwiched between two internationally recognized “Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas”, Orwell Bay and Governor’s Island.



The beautiful coastal bluff at Crown Point, overlooking Hillsborough Bay.

Crown Point contains an exceptional mixture of salt and freshwater marsh, peatland, coastal cliffs, extensive shoreline and tidal flats, forested land and woodland edges. It is one of the few coastal headlands close to Charlottetown that remains undeveloped. The acquisition of this land will make a major contribution to the preservation of PEI’s coastal wildlife habitat and ecosystems.

The two Lewes properties total 109- acres and contain remnants of old growth woodlands that are rare in the province and the Maritimes in general. Mature eastern hemlock, white pine, sugar maple, American beech, and yellow birch are present as a mix, in pockets that provide tremendous value as a seed source for younger forests. These forests provide important habitat for native pollinators and insect-eating species at risk.

The back of the property contains old growth upland and riparian hardwood forest with a diverse mix of hemlock, sugar maple, red spruce, yellow birch and beech, in a rare, outstanding example of the original Acadian Forest that once covered the Island. This hardwood forest is home to a diverse mix of resident and migratory wildlife, has a complex understory, and borders a provincial natural area that allows for greater movement of wildlife in a larger forested block.

Fundraising efforts have been underway for both of these properties and thanks to your contributions we are nearing our goals. However, with a limited timeframe to purchase both of these properties, we are in need of a push from our friends and supporters!



A view of the lush forest found in the Lewes properties that INT is working to acquire

Featured Contributor



Michael Speelman just started with INT in January! He is assisting with land acquisition and stewardship. Michael graduated from the Master of Forest Conservation program at the University of Toronto in 2017 and, after spending two years living and working in BC, has returned to PEI to work with INT. You can contact Michael via email at stewardship@islandnaturetrust.ca

Megan Harris, Executive Director
exdir@islandnaturetrust.ca

Vicki Johnson, Piping Plover Coordinator
plover@islandnaturetrust.ca

Lyndsay MacWilliams, Temp. Admin Assistant
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Julie-Lynn Zahavich, Stewardship Coordinator
julielynn@islandnaturetrust.ca

2020 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 areas protection and stewardship.

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

The draw will take place at the Island Nature Trust office on May 8th, 2020.

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



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

Partnerships

Working Together to Monitor Forest Birds



One of the ARUs we used to gather bird data

Last year INT received funds from the Federal-Provincial Priority Places Program and the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund to explore differences between bird communities in plantations and natural forests in partnership with the Abegweit Conservation Society (ACS). The ACS is a charitable branch of the Abegweit First Nation, based in Scotchfort PEI, which carries out stewardship activities in-stream and on land.

Before our field work got underway, in May, staff from both INT and ACS were trained by Peter Thomas (Wildlife Biologist with the Canadian Wildlife Service) on how to program and install autonomous recording units (ARUs).

We focused our efforts in three stewardship areas where both INT and ACS work: Deroche Pond, Morell River, and Midgell River. In each focal area, two ARUs were installed, one in a forested natural area and one in a nearby plantation. The purpose of deploying ARUs in this pairwise manner was to allow for comparisons of bird communities between these different forest types.

The ARUs were programmed to record audio every morning at sunrise for 30 minutes. INT staff then retrieved the ARUs and listened to the recordings to quantify the bird communities at each site. The results of our comparison were quite interesting!

A total of 41 species were recorded by the ARU and detected by INT staff, including 6 species of conservation concern. Over half (51%) of species detected were found in both natural forests and plantations, while 27% of all species were only found in natural forests and 22% were only found in plantations. While there was some overlap in bird species between habitats, there were some species guilds that seemed to prefer one habitat type over another. Plantations were particularly important for cavity nesters and wood boring birds (i.e. woodpecker species), while natural forests seem to be particularly important for shrub and ground nesters (e.g. Canada Warbler, Winter Wren), and wet woodland and shrub foragers (e.g. Northern Waterthrush, Black-billed Cuckoo).

Our results have broadened our understanding of how forest birds are using plantations and natural forests and will inform how we manage our forests in the future!

Volunteer Page

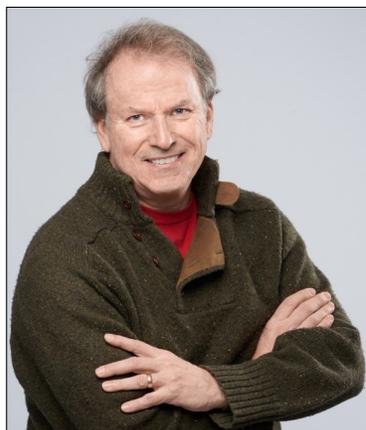
Introducing INT's Newest Board Members

At our AGM in September 2019, we elected a new group of directors to sit on our board. Our board members bring an immense amount of knowledge and skill to Island Nature Trust and contribute to our work through a variety of committees. We would like to extend a very warm welcome to the following new directors who will serve on our board.



Mary Acorn holds a Master's degree in Public Health Sciences, and an educational background in food sciences and community nutrition. Mary Acorn has worked with the Chief of Public Health Office, the Department of Family and Human Services, and the PEI Healthy Eating Alliance. Mary is interested in the role nature plays in enriching our lives from a health and wellness perspective. Connecting people, especially children with the peacefulness of nature is significant for her and she sees the benefits during times she and her children spend in nature on family land in the Montague area.

Patricia Caporaso has 25 years of international executive leadership experience in agribusiness, food systems, and animal production in Latin America, Europe, Africa and North America. She is the Managing Director and Founder of Food for Development, the President/CEO/Founder of ynSyte (*INSIGHT*), and is a Guest Lecturer and Visiting Researcher at Georgetown University in the area of food systems, trade and value chains, livestock production and climate change. She and her husband live on a farm in Virginia. When she is home on PEI she loves to row and one can often find her in the Southwest river or Charlottetown Harbour, enjoying nature, as a member of Rowing PEI.



Bruce Craig has held a variety of positions with the U.S. National Park Services. He has experience as a non-profit manager, first as the regional director for National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), then as Executive Director of the National Park Trust (NPT), and as a manager of several other park support organizations. His professional life also included historical heritage as the Executive Director and Washington representative of the National Coalition for History (NCH), an organization whose mission is to strengthen history, archives, and funding for the arts and humanities. Upon moving to Canada in 2007, Bruce embarked on a new career as a professor of history at UPEI. Since 2016, he has also served as president of the Prince Edward Island Symphony Orchestra and presently serves on the board of Orchestras Canada.

Stéphane LeBlanc offers many new skills to the INT Board such as his strategic management, vision, and communications experience serving with many organizations such as Université de Moncton, Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation, and Veterans Affairs Canada where he currently leads a team in Strategic Communications. When he is not occupied with his busy work life and other volunteer activities, Stéphane and his son enjoy hiking and snowshoeing through the Auburn Woodlot, biking on the trails of the Bonshaw Hills, or spending time on the water in Murray River.



Island Nature Trust Projects

Piping Plover Update



Female plover "2J"

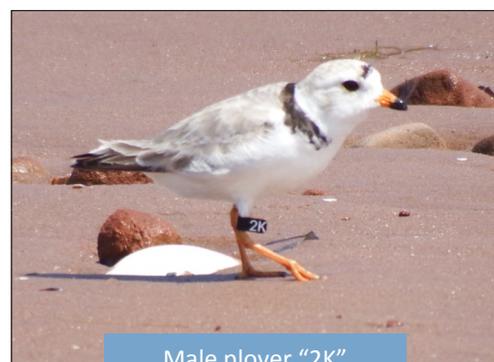
Winter is well underway in Prince Edward Island! The constant, frigid, island temperatures have a way of bringing back fond thoughts of the summer's sun. The cold has certainly not affected our piping plovers (*Charadrius melodus melodus*), who have already landed on the beaches of southern U.S, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Here, they have spent the last 5 months and will continue to spend the next 2-3 months preparing for their migration back for the next breeding season on PEI!

These intrepid travellers nest every summer on sandy beaches along the Eastern Seaboard and in the Atlantic Canadian provinces. PEI was home to 72 individual piping plovers this past summer – that is 16 more individuals than 2018. Every year, INT staff and volunteers monitor breeding piping plovers and talk to beach users about how they can minimize their impacts on these vulnerable birds. A total of 23 breeding pairs were monitored on provincial beaches (outside of the National Park beaches) from April until the end of August. From these 23 breeding pairs, 20 chicks fledged (one

more chick fledged than in 2018). We consider a chick fledged once it reaches 20 days old, at which point the chicks are capable of short flights.

The summer of 2019 was, yet again, another rollercoaster for our beloved plovers. Very high spring tides and strong wind gusts along PEI's north shore in June devastated the majority of active nests before they had a chance to hatch. But despite these weather events, the plovers persisted.

One pair in particular, banded as 2K (male) and 2J (female) whom we've been following with a close eye all summer long and into the winter, are the definitions of persistence and perseverance. If you have followed along with our social media posts, you may recall that these two individuals nested in 2018 at Anglo, Rustico and fledged all four chicks. In 2019, after their third nest attempt, 2K and 2J were able to fledge all three chicks at Anglo, Rustico yet again!



Male plover "2K"



One of 2K and 2J's chicks

Although hurricane Dorian posed a huge threat to all plovers in the wintering grounds, 2K and 2J have persevered! From months September to December, 2K has been spotted jumping back and forth on the beaches of South Carolina. On the other hand, 2J has been in the Bahamas since 10 days post the devastation of Hurricane Dorian!

It will not be long before the early birds start arriving in April. Get in touch if you'd like to learn more about how to become a Piping Plover Guardian. Guardians participate in many aspects of the Plover Program – from collecting monitoring data and talking with beach users, to participating in beach cleanups and habitat restoration activities. It's a great way to help a species at risk and enjoy our beautiful beaches!

Notes & News

Barb McDonald: 37 Years with INT

If there was a definition for a loyal, dedicated employee, you might read “Barb McDonald” as the first example. Barb has been with Island Nature Trust since January of 1985 and was the corporate memory for the organization. Throughout her many years with the Trust, she was the glue that held everything together, from organizing fundraising dinners, gathering pledges for the Bennett Birding Classic, keeping the day-to-day office operations running smoothly, to sharing her skills as a recycling extraordinaire (the list goes on)!

Words cannot begin to describe our appreciation for the work and dedication Barb has displayed during her 37 years with Island Nature Trust. Saying farewell to an invaluable team member is never easy, but we wish you all the best now and into the future!

We spoke with a few of the many close friends of Barb as well as those who have had the pleasure to work with her, during her time with Island Nature Trust. Below is a collection of their fond memories.

“Barb thoroughly enjoyed the rare days when she got out of the office at the Island Nature Trust and could help with field work such as looking for Piping Plovers, cleaning up beaches, planting trees, pulling purple loosestrife and doing marram grass transplants. All those years growing up and working on the family farm in Traveller’s Rest really prepared her for this manual work. However, it was a great break from office work... and she got a great tan. Seriously. Barb was the model employee who believed in the conservation cause and who really liked working with others who shared this objective.” **-Diane Griffin**

“If I recall correctly I was on the Board of Directors serving as Secretary when Barb started working for the Trust in the early 1980s. At that time, the office was located on the third floor of Beaconsfield and she was stationed in a tiny little office there. But somehow she managed to keep everything, including us, well organized! When I began serving as President (1987 to 1990) and we were deep into the Land Use Commission hearings about Greenwich, she was an incredible asset, keeping track of many documents to help us in our efforts. We used to have great fun with our similar names—mine is Barb MACDonald and hers is Barb MCDonald—and people often got us mixed up. Whenever we spoke on the phone we would say, “Hello Barb, it’s the other Barb!”, which always made us chuckle.

Throughout all of her years of working with the Trust, Barb (the other one!) has demonstrated an incredible commitment and dedication to the organization—always willing to pitch in as needed to further the Trust’s goals. She navigated through all of the changes over the years, and as Directors and staff have come and gone, Barb kept the threads of corporate memory together, knowing exactly where to look for things and remembering exactly what needed to be done and when. And throughout all of that, she was always ready to greet everyone with a cheery voice and friendly smile, making people feel welcome and valued. Barb, I know you will be greatly missed at the Trust, but I wish you all the best in this new opportunity!” **-Barb MacDonald**

“For the past 37 years, Barb was the smiling face or friendly voice on the phone that almost always greeted me when I contacted the Island Nature Trust office especially during summers when most staff were in the field. She was a mainstay of the fundraising dinners and the after dinner worker get together as well as a very successful ticket seller for dinners, raffles, and bird seed sales and an effective pledge raiser for the Neil Bennett Autumn Birding Classic.

Those familiar with Barb’s dedication and efficiency know that she was incomparable when it came to recycling and re-using materials; somehow, she would make a normal sheet of paper three-sided. Despite some memorable bad weather days, she and her Toyota would brave the drifting snow along Route 2 in Fredericton sometimes making it in record time. Thanks for all you have done to make the Trust a success!” **-Dan McAskill**



A rare photo of Barb, who becomes very elusive when cameras are nearby!

Our Generous Donors in 2019

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Our Generous Donors in 2019

In Memoriam Donations

Steven Hardy Continued:

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Florence Kelly

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Confederation Centre of the Arts
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Carole Worth

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Dr. Gary & Carol Morgan
Holly Ross & Robert Kernaghan
Sandra Sharpe
Jodi Shea
Staff of HR - PEI Tax Centre
Donna Williams
Jason & Jodi Williams

Thank you to all the generous donors who contributed to our work in 2019!

Upcoming Nature Events

Feb 14-17th - Great Backyard Bird Count 2020 – Contribute to a worldwide citizen science project from your own backyard! For more information on the Great Backyard Bird Count 2020, visit: <http://gbbc.birdcount.org>

Feb 22nd - PEI Winter Woodlot Tour – Free, family-friendly event at Bluefield High School, 9am–1pm. Activities include: snowshoeing, sleigh rides, chainsaw maintenance demos, and more. For more details visit: <https://infopeiwinterwoodl.wixsite.com/winterwoodlottour>

Mar 3rd - Nature PEI March Meeting — Dr. Mike van Den Heuvel will be Nature PEI's guest speaker with a presentation on estuarine health on Prince Edward Island. Meeting starts at 7:30 pm at Beaconsfield, the Carriage House, corner of West and Kent Street, Charlottetown

Apr 7th - Nature PEI April Meeting — Dr. Andrew McKenzie-Goptill will be Nature PEI's guest speaker with a presentation on invasive species on PEI. Meeting starts at 7:30 pm at Beaconsfield, the Carriage House, corner of West and Kent Street, Charlottetown

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:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| June Jenkins Sanderson | President |
| Jan Matejcek | Vice-President |
| Linda Berko | Secretary/PEI Museums & Heritage Fdn. |
| Rob MacKay | Treasurer |

Group Representatives:

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Gerald MacDougall | Nature PEI |
| Keila Miller | PEI Wildlife Federation |
| Kevin Teather | UPEI Biology Dept. |

Remaining Board Members:

Mary Acorn
Patricia Caporaso
Bruce Craig
Joyce Dewar
Jurgen Krause
Stéphane LeBlanc
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:

Ravenwood, Experimental Farm
PO Box 265
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 7K4

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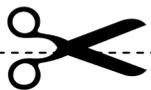
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Island Nature Trust



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Join us! Become a Member!

Please take a moment to fill out the form below and return it to the address above with your membership fee. You can also join through the "Join Now" button on our website! 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) _____

Life (\$500) _____ Donation \$ _____ (Tax receipts will be issued for all donations)

Payment Method: Cheque _____ Money Order _____ Visa _____ MasterCard _____

Card Number: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Signature: _____

A Sneak Peek at 2020

It's only February but we are already looking ahead to the summer and planning our roster of events! We will again be offering a Passport to Nature event series, which we had great success with in 2019. Last year we hosted 11 events and engaged over 200 people! This year, we hope to see even more people at our events, show off some of our new natural areas, and provide opportunities for local businesses to sponsor our work!



A group shot from one of our St. Peter's Island walks. Photo by Paul Vreeland

Back by popular demand, we will be offering our annual walk across the tidal flats to St. Peter's Island again in 2020. This has grown to become one of our most loved events. Last year we hosted three walks to St. Peter's Island, including one exclusively for INT members, and all of them were full!

This year we will be hosting two walks to St. Peter's Island, one for the general public and one just for our members—a good reason to fill out that membership form on page 11! Dates and times are still to be determined for these walks, so stay tuned to our website and social media channels for updates.

In addition to some of our more well-established events, we are planning some adventures into our newly acquired natural areas (see page 2) and natural areas that we plan to acquire in the coming months (see page 3). These will include walks out to the coastal bluff at Crown Point, along the Percival River in Alaska, and through the beautiful mature forest in Tenmile House. We can't wait to explore these new properties with you! We'll also be incorporating some of the, volunteer-led workshops offered at our fundraising dinner last year. There's certainly lots to look forward to in 2020!

There are also opportunities for local businesses to get involved through our new Passport to Nature Sponsorship program. Businesses can partner with INT and support our work to acquire and protect publically-accessible natural areas across the province. In return for their support, and depending on level of support, businesses can receive advertising in our passport booklets, have their logo added to our website, and mentions on our social media platforms, reaching almost 4,000 people. Plus, sponsorship is a great way to demonstrate your business' support for nature conservation! If you would like more information on our Passport to Nature sponsorship opportunities, please get in touch!



Group photo from our 2019 Hemlock Walk

On Hiatus: INT Annual Fundraising Dinner

This spring we have made the tough decision to take a rest year from the annual fundraising dinner. While we know our supporters look forward to this social time with old friends and new, it is quite a feat to organize. With our focus this past year on land securement, the staff and board were unable to spare the resources needed to plan the dinner. On behalf of all staff and board members, thank you so much to those who donated items or attended this event in past years! We hope we can appeal for your help in other ways during the year.

We do aim to host smaller events in the summer and fall, and will be sure to share details once we have some firm dates and activities lined up. Please stay tuned!