

Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area

The *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area* is 6.9 acres located in Fernwood, Prince County, Prince Edward Island. The Mi'kmaq name for Seacow Head is Pastue'kati, which means “A place where seacows are plentiful” (Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, Traditional Use Map). The landscape surrounding the natural area is primarily used for agriculture or seasonal cottages, making the property an important refuge for wildlife.

Acquisition and Legal Status

The *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area* was donated by the estate of Island artist, Elaine Harrison, whose former home still stands on the eastern corner of the property. The property was acquired by Island Nature Trust in December 2012 and was designated under PEI's *Natural Areas Protection Act* (NAPA) on November 4th, 2013. Elaine Harrison's former home and surrounding yard are not owned by Island Nature Trust.

Surrounding Land Use

The *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area* is bordered to the north and west by the Northumberland Strait. To the east, the landscape is dominated by active agriculture fields, and to the south, are several private residences and more agricultural land. Approximately 2.5 km east of the *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area* is another Island Nature Trust property, the *Salutation Cove Natural Area*.

Plant Community

The *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area* was once an agricultural field that is now being reforested. This natural area was part of MacPhail Woods' Confederation Forest Project in 2014. The goal of the project was to plant forests in protected areas, so that they can grow into mature Acadian forest stands, accessible to the public with walking paths. As part of the project, various species of hardy native plants were planted and wildlife habitat enhancements such as nesting boxes were installed.

Plantings occurred in 2014 with MacPhail Woods staff, INT staff, and volunteers taking part. As of 2017, approximately 600 trees, shrubs, flowers and ferns have been planted on site using 30 different native species. These are all flora well suited to the varying conditions of the site as well as the climate of the region as they were grown from local seed stock. The planted vegetation requires annual monitoring which consists of checking for survivability, continuing with planting more natives and pruning. A forest management plan for the property includes stabilizing the cliff edges by replacing collapsing white spruce and balsam fir with lower shrubs and small deciduous trees.



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Wildlife Community

Despite the lack of forest cover in the *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area*, the property provides habitat for many bird and wildlife species. A boreal chickadee was observed on May 30th, 2017, in addition to a tree swallow that was using the nest box installed on the property sign. Additional bird species that have been observed using the property include chestnut-sided warbler, yellow warbler, ruffed grouse, northern flicker, and golden-crowned kinglet. Common loons using the Northumberland Strait have also been heard calling from the *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area*. The cliffs on this property provide nesting habitat for cliff-nesting birds such as Belted Kingfisher, Bank Swallows and Double-crested Cormorants. Other wildlife observed using the natural area includes snowshoe hare and red fox.

Access

The *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area* can be accessed using Fernwood Road in Bedeque. Once on the Fernwood Road, drive to the end and turn onto Sherry Road. Drive to the end of Sherry Road and the natural area is on your left. The natural area is marked with a Fernwood Confederation Forest sign. Because the natural area is bounded by the coast and there is little forest cover, visitors should find the natural area easy to navigate with a map. Please take care along the cliff edges, as they are eroding in places.



The *Seacow Head Cliffs Natural Area* represented in green in the map to the left.