

Townshend Woodlot Natural Area

The *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* is 62 acres located in Souris Line Road, Kings County, Prince Edward Island. This property, and the provincially-owned natural area it lies next to, provides a glimpse into what forests in PEI used to look like and what they could look like again through restoration and protection.

Acquisition and Legal Status

The *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* was acquired in two parts. The original 50 acres, which contains a section of rich old growth upland hardwood, was purchased in 2005. An additional 12 acres, lying adjacent to the original property and containing a mix of young balsam fir, yellow birch, and some older American beech, was purchased in 2017. Both parcels are designated under PEI's *Natural Areas Protection Act*.

Surrounding Land Use

The *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* is almost entirely surrounded by forested land. To the north and northwest are privately-owned woodlots, to the east is an active agriculture field, and to the south and southwest is a provincially-owned forested natural area with the same name. The neighbouring provincial natural area contains some of the oldest upland hardwood forest in PEI.

Plant Community

The newly acquired 12 acre parcel on the east end of the *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* is much younger than the accompanying 50 acres to the west. This new parcel contains grey, yellow, and white birch, sugar maple, trembling aspen, and American beech, with a thick understory of balsam fir.

The 50 acre section to the west is mature forest with a great diversity of vegetation throughout in the canopy, shrub understory and forest floor communities. This portion also includes a small, narrow stream running through the back end of the property (a headwater stream for Cross River), and a small area of black spruce, sphagnum moss bog surrounded by mature forest. Trees found in this portion of the property include; red maple, striped maple, mountain maple, balsam fir, trembling aspen, black spruce, and American beech. The forest floor is mostly covered with ground hemlock, club moss and leaves. Lungwort lichen, a healthy forest indicator, is present on many trees throughout the property.

Several rare plant species have also been observed here. In 2017, INT staff found the small round-leaved orchid on this property, a plant that was much more common prior to the clearing of forests by European settlers but which is now considered rare. Dwarf ginseng, a plant considered at risk in PEI, is also present throughout the property. The *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* is an excellent, and rare, example of mature Acadian Forest. The Mi'kmaq call this type of forest Wapane'kati or "land of dawn" forest.



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Wildlife Community

The *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* is home to many bird species, including: ovenbird, hermit thrush, northern waterthrush, black-throated blue warbler, black-throated green warbler, palm warbler, pileated woodpecker, black-and-white warbler and red-eyed vireo. In addition, during bird surveys conducted in 2017-18, two forest-nesting species at risk were detected: Canada warbler (Threatened) and eastern wood-pewee (Special Concern). Many of these forest birds are migratory and use this forest only to nest in the summer, often on the forest floor or low in the shrub understory. Fox, racoon, red squirrel, snowshoe hare, eastern chipmunk, garter snake, and yellow-spotted salamander have all been observed in the *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area*.

Access

The *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* has no trails and is contiguous with a much larger forest block; those visiting can do so only on foot and should have a good comfort level with navigating using a compass or GPS. The natural area can be accessed via the Souris Line Road and a right-of-way along adjoining property boundaries. Turn down the driveway to #786 Souris Line Road, drive past the farmhouse down the farm lane until it ends at the back end of a field. There is an old woods road that lies on the south side of the property and extends for a further 750 m. On the north side of this old woods road is Island Nature Trust's *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* and to the south is the provincially-owned *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area*.



In the map to the left, the original INT *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* (50 acres) is represented as a green block with the newly acquired parcel (12 acres) outlined in green. The provincially-owned *Townshend Woodlot Natural Area* is represented as orange blocks.