



**Saving
Sable Island**



**CPAWS is Canada's voice for wilderness.
For over 45 years, we've played a lead role in
creating over two-thirds of Canada's
protected areas.**

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Message from the Board

The last six months have been an exciting time for wilderness protection in Nova Scotia. The release of the Colin Stewart Forest Forum report, the completion of the province's large land purchase program, the Bay of Fundy study by Parks Canada, the announcement of Sable Island National Park, and the extension of the Georges Bank moratorium for oil and gas exploration were all significant steps for conservation. Read on to find out more! CPAWS Nova Scotia held our first annual Blue Jeans Gala and Photo Contest in March. It was an enjoyable evening of photography, music, and conservation. Thanks to all the hard-working volunteers, and to everyone who entered the photo contest. See you at next year's gala!

There are a number of new faces around CPAWS-NS in 2010. Rodrigo Menafrá has stepped into the role of Marine Conservation Coordinator while Ashley Sprague is on maternity leave. Rodrigo brings a wealth of experience in integrated coastal management. Welcome Rodrigo! Supporting Rodrigo in his work this summer will be Erin Mutrie and Amber Stroeder. We also thank our dedicated volunteers, especially Agata Pawlowski, Astrid Dispert, and Ana Perez.

CPAWS was sorry to announce the departure of Christina MacLeod, our Education Coordinator. We know she will bring her ability to connect with the public to her new role with the Heart and Stroke Foundation. Sadly, a number of board members are leaving us as well. John Glynn-Morris and Cheyenne Dickinson both stepped down in January. We want to thank them for their tremendous commitment to the board, on the executive and committees. They are both missed and we wish them well! We have some directors who will be retiring after this year's AGM, including Amanda Lavers, Graham Smith, Jennifer Graham and James Sullivan. All have given years of tireless service to environmental protection in Nova Scotia and to CPAWS-NS in particular, for which we thank them.

We also have some new faces on the board as well. Both Alison Walsh and Guan Yue are students at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie University, and bring great energy to their new roles. Welcome aboard! We are still looking to fill board positions for the upcoming year. If you think you may be interested, please drop me a note at derekalansimon@gmail.com to learn more about the positions available.

Finally, if you are looking for a way to continue your valued support of CPAWS-NS visit our website to donate or to volunteer.

Yours Truly,

Derek Simon, President
CPAWS Nova Scotia

About the cover

"This Sable Island stallion stood quiet for several minutes while being photographed". The photography of Damian Lidgard focuses on expressive interpretations of nature from the Canadian Atlantic Provinces. www.lidgardphotography.com



Irwin Barrett

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CPAWS Nova Scotia AGM



Sable Island

Our next national park

Sable Island Green Horse Society

By: Chris Miller

Sable Island is about to become Canada's newest national park. This iconic and windswept island, located about 300 kilometres southeast of Halifax, is famous for its wild horses, immense sand dunes, and abundance of wildlife.

In May, at a ceremony on Parliament Hill, Jim Prentice the Federal Minister of Environment and John MacDonell the Nova Scotia Minister of Natural Resources announced the intention to protect Sable Island as a national park to protect its important natural and cultural features.

"It is with pleasure that I announce the commitment by the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia to explore how Sable Island could be designated as a national park", said Minister Prentice.

"In this International Year of Biodiversity, what better way to celebrate than by taking steps toward the long-lasting protection of Sable Island, its majestic horses and some of the rarest birds and wildlife in Canada by designating it a national park".

"A national park designation gives Sable Island the highest level of protection of its natural and cultural features", said Minister MacDonell.

This announcement followed a three-month review period by the Federal government and the Nova Scotia government that jointly examined two protected area options for conserving Sable Island; (1) National Park or (2) National Wildlife Area.

CPAWS joined forces with the Ecology Action Centre and the Sable Island Green Horse Society and publicly supported the national park option for protecting Sable Island. A national park designation would provide stronger conservation measures for the island and require management for ecological integrity as a first priority.

It would ensure that there is a dedicated agency responsible for protecting Sable Island with existing expertise at conserving some of Canada's most important natural areas. It would also ensure a continued human presence on the island, important for monitoring the ecological health of the island, and result in new and sustained funding for important scientific research occurring on the island.

Despite the perception by many that Sable Island is already adequately protected from over-use, very little legal protection is actually in place to protect the island and very few requests to visit the island are turned down by the federal government. Even small cruise ships are starting to make stops nearby and bringing passengers onto the island. Unless something is done soon to bring real legal protection to Sable Island, this unique and treasured island, with its significant biodiversity and abundance of wildlife, will become increasingly at risk of disturbance.

Conservation significance

Sable Island is a thin, crescent-shaped island containing the largest sand dunes in Nova Scotia. It is 3,400 hectares in size, measuring 42 kilometres in length and 1.5 kilometres in width at its widest point. The island is well known for its herds of wild horses. About three hundred horses reside on the island, descendents from horses that were introduced to the island in the 1700's. This is one of the few remaining populations of wild horses remaining in North America, protected today only by the Sable Island regulations of the *Canada Shipping Act*.

More than 300 species of birds are known from Sable Island. Some of these are quite rare, such as the roseate tern and the Ipswich sparrow. Sable Island is the only place in the world where the Ipswich sparrow is known to breed. The island is a particularly significant location for congregations of seabirds and shorebirds. It is recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA) for its globally-significant migratory land bird concentrations and is considered nationally-significant for its presence of threatened and restricted range species.

Sable Island contains an abundance of marine mammals as well. This includes the largest grey seal colony in the world, numbering almost a quarter million grey seals. A total of five different species of seals can be found on the island. In addition to the grey seals, there are also harbour seals, harp seals, hooded seals, and ringed seals. Populations of walrus used to occur on the island, but their numbers were decimated long ago.

The cultural history of Sable Island is also very rich. The first documented accounts of Sable Island came from Portuguese explorers in the early 1500's. The French government attempted unsuccessfully to colonize the island shortly after. Two lighthouses were constructed on the island in the 1800's and a life-saving station was set-up. Known as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic", hundreds of shipwrecks scatter the shores of Sable Island. The most recent ship to be washed-up on the island during a storm was the Merrimac, in 1999.

A research station is maintained on Sable Island and a number of important scientific studies are underway there. Records from Sable Island are some of the longest, continuous records of environmental change in North America dating back over a century. Insecure funding for the Sable Island Station has threatened the very existence of the research station in recent years and the important scientific research taking place there.



John MacDonell, Nova Scotia Minister of Natural Resources (left) and CPAWS' Chris Miller (right) on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on the day of the announcement Sable Island will become a national park.

The creation of Sable Island National Park will be the first new national park established in Nova Scotia in almost a half-century, with the last one being Kejimikujik National Park established in 1967. Considerable progress has been made in recent years expanding the system of national parks in Canada, such as the expansion of Nahanni National Park in the Northwest Territories last year and the establishment of Mealy Mountains National Park in Labrador earlier this year, becoming Atlantic Canada's largest national park. Sable Island will soon join the ranks of some of Canada's most important natural places protected as national parks.

Strict conditions needed

As the national park is set-up, strict conditions will need to be applied to the management of Sable Island. Because of its significance, its remoteness, and its sensitivity to disturbance, every precaution must be taken to protect the important ecosystems of Sable Island. This means limiting the amount of visitors to the island and ensuring that the strongest conservation measures are applied to the island.

There is growing interest in visiting Sable Island, but the best way to appreciate Sable Island is from afar. Too many visitors can damage the island and can result in the phenomenon of *'loving the place to death'*. As Parks Canada moves ahead with a national park designation for the island, caps will need to be placed on the total number of visitors who can visit the island each year, with strict limits on where they can go when they're on the island. There will also need to be blackout periods for visitors during important breeding periods for wildlife and limits on the amount of infrastructure placed on the island to accommodate visitors.

Parks Canada should also consider developing alternate visitor experiences, as a means to showcase the ecological and cultural significance of Sable Island while at the same time limiting visitors to the island. Imagine a state-of-the-art pavilion for Sable Island, in downtown Halifax perhaps, where people interested in Sable Island could go to learn about the island, talk to interpreters and researchers, and experience the island by viewing spectacular videos and pictures from the island. This could become an important tourist attraction for Nova Scotia and have the added benefit of reducing impacts on Sable Island by developing a first-class alternate visitor experience off-island.



D. Skinner; posted on Google Earth

Another issue that will need to be addressed as Parks Canada creates a national park for Sable Island is the close proximity of oil and gas development to the future national park. Several companies maintain licenses to access the island and Parks Canada will need to initiate discussions with these companies. It is imperative that no oil and gas drilling or exploration takes place on the island.

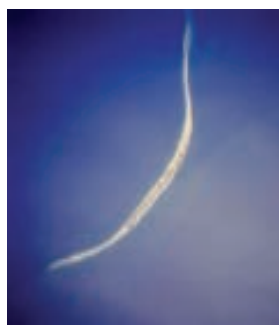
One advantage of having Sable Island designated as a national park is that it will now join a family of national parks across the country, which will mean there will be a dedicated research program for the island and a secure operating budget that each park receives to conserve the ecosystems within its borders. For Sable Island, this will also mean ensuring that the Sable Island Station is maintained and that the valuable scientific research that's been taking place on the island will continue in perpetuity.

Public consultations

Parks Canada will kick-start public consultations on the future of Sable Island shortly. If you care about Sable Island, it's important that you participate.

CPAWS will be working hard to ensure that the management plan developed for Sable Island National Park will utilize the strongest conservation measures possible, and put limits on visitors to the island and curtails access by the oil and gas industry.

If you'd like to stay involved, please send us an email (wilderness@cpawsns.org) with the subject "Sable Island" so we can send you information about the upcoming public consultations. The future of Sable Island is in our hands. It's important our voices are heard.



Sable Island is smiling at the news about the national park



Sara Iverson



Sara Iverson



Sara Iverson

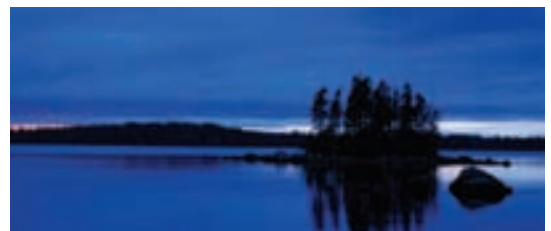
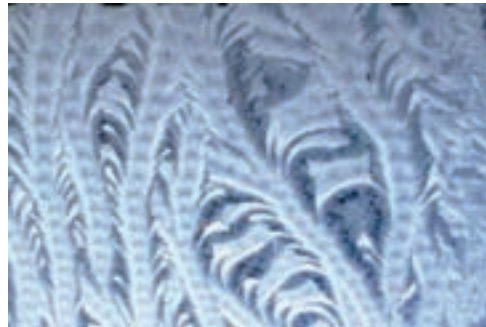


Damian Lidgard

Photo contest

In March, CPAWS NS hosted a Blue Jean Gala to celebrate the beauty of Nova Scotia. Here's a collection of the many photos that were submitted for our annual photo contest. A big thanks to everyone who participated and helped out.





This land is your land...

By: Chris Miller

The Nova Scotia government has completed its 'large land purchase' program for this year, acquiring a total of 56,000 hectares of private land from four forestry companies for a total of \$75 million. The substantial majority of these land acquisitions will become new protected areas and most of the purchases were properties specifically recommended by environmental groups, including CPAWS.

In Nova Scotia, only about 30% of the provincial landmass is publicly-owned, so acquiring large tracts of land for conservation is critical for protecting wilderness. Almost one million hectares of land in Nova Scotia is owned by five forestry companies, or about 15% of the total landmass of the province, and much of that land is currently for sale. The major land purchase by the Nova Scotia government is a significant step for conservation in this province.

Acquired by the provincial government are stretches of wilderness coastline along the Bay of Fundy over 40km in length, critical old forest and rare plant occurrences, frontage on significant waterways such as the St. Mary's River, uncommon karst landscape features, a portion of Kelly's Mountain in Cape Breton, and sites adjacent to existing protected areas. Lands were purchased from J.D. Irving Ltd., Neenah Paper (Northern Pulp), NewPage Port Hawkesbury Ltd., and Wagner Forest Management.

For the past several years, CPAWS has been working collaboratively with forest companies, environmental groups, and the provincial government to expand the protected area system in Nova Scotia. In late 2009, the final report of the Colin Stewart Forest Forum was submitted to government and a key recommendation was for the Province to acquire large tracts of land from the forest companies critical for conservation. \$100 million was identified as a key target for land acquisition and the Nova Scotia government came up with \$75 million in new capital spending to purchase these lands.

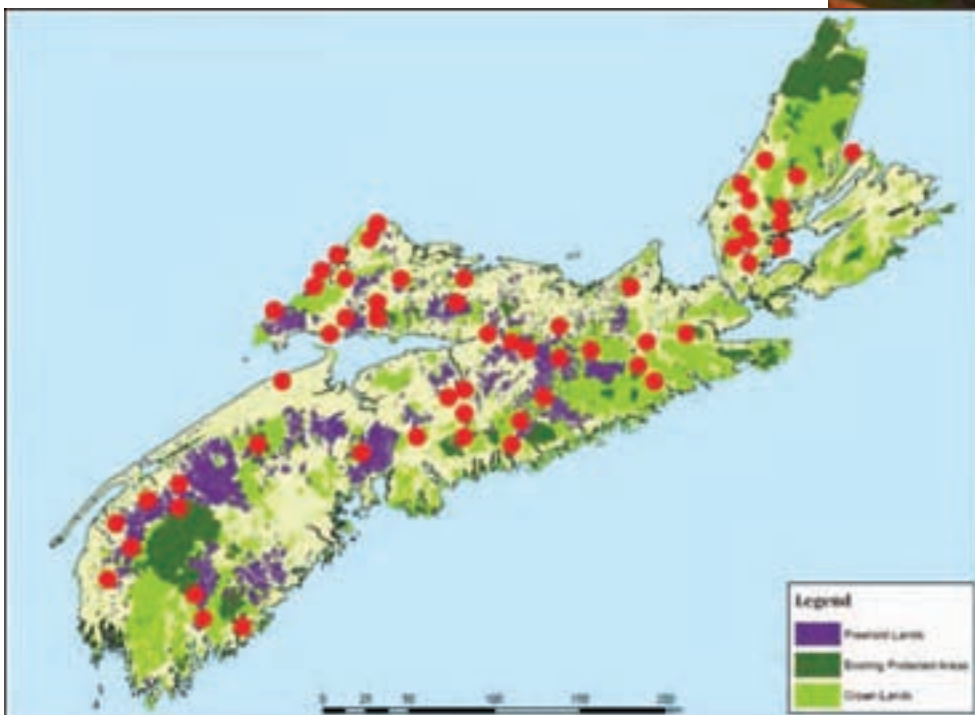
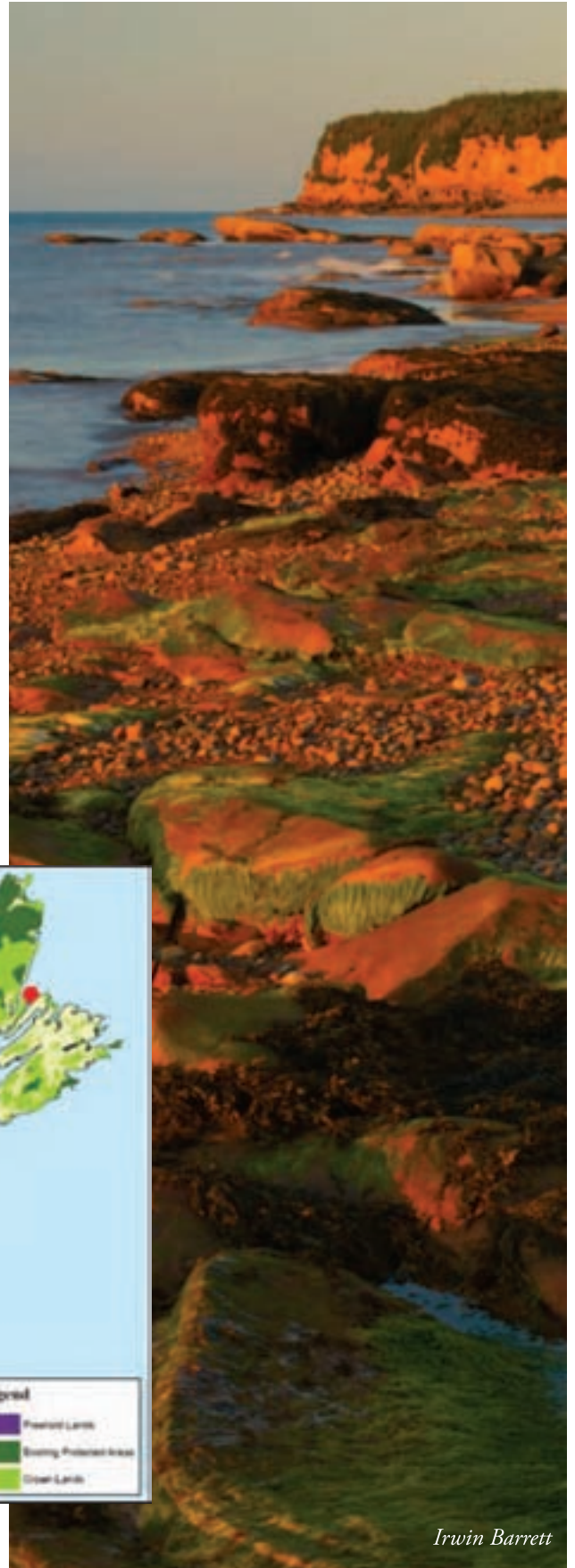
Above: Apple Head. A recent land purchase along the shores of the Bay of Fundy near Cape Chignecto

The 56,000 hectares of land that were acquired represent the largest land purchase for conservation in Nova Scotia's history. Previously, the largest land purchase for conservation was 10,000 hectares of land acquired from Bowater Mersey Paper Co. in 2007 for \$27 million.

CPAWS commends the provincial government for taking this important step for conservation. Acquiring these lands is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Nova Scotians. It means that some of the most important lands owned by the forest companies will now be protected and that Nova Scotians will always have access to these important woodlands with their vast systems of lakes, rivers, and forest.

Although the job is not finished, this is a big step in the right direction to ensure that Nova Scotia holds onto some of its most important wilderness areas before it's too late. CPAWS would also like to commend the many provincial employees who worked tirelessly behind-the-scenes to ensure that the land purchases occurred satisfactorily and on time.

With the completion of these land purchases, about 1% of Nova Scotia's total landmass was brought back into public ownership; no small achievement.



Lands purchased by the Nova Scotia government (map: CPAWS-NS)

Irwin Barrett



Bay of Fundy

Parks Canada kick-starts conservation study

Scott Leslie

By: Rodrigo Menafrá

Parks Canada has kick-started an important conservation study of the Bay of Fundy. The purpose of the study is to “identify preliminary representative marine areas for the Bay of Fundy Marine Region”. The commencement of this work is an important first step towards Parks Canada’s setting up a National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA) for the Bay of Fundy, as part of a national system of marine protected areas to represent the full range of marine ecosystems found in Canada’s Atlantic, Arctic, and Pacific oceans, as well as the Great Lakes. NMCA’s are places where conservation and sustainable local fisheries are encouraged, protected from industrial threats damaging to marine ecosystems.

The Bay of Fundy is a globally significant ecosystem, rich in ecological and biological diversity. It is well known for the world’s highest tides and associated strong upwellings that create nutrient-rich feeding grounds for whales, including the endangered North Atlantic right whale. Unfortunately, the natural resources of the bay are in decline and threatened by overfishing, habitat destruction, and growing industrial development.

At present, the Bay of Fundy lacks any marine habitat protection, therefore the Parks Canada study is an important milestone towards ensuring the conservation of ecological significant habitats in the Bay of Fundy. The study will identify preliminary representative marine areas which capture the diversity of the Bay of Fundy’s physical oceanographic, biological, and geological features, as well as its historical and cultural characteristics.

Above: An endangered right whale makes its way through the waters of the Bay of Fundy (photo credit: Scott Leslie)

Once these areas have been identified, extensive local consultations will be undertaken and the candidate sites will undergo a feasibility study to determine the most suitable site for a National Marine Conservation Area.

CPAWS-NS has been examining the conservation significance of the Digby Neck and Islands area, on Nova Scotia's Fundy coast, as a potential site for an NMCA. Digby Neck and Islands has many features that make it an ideal NMCA candidate site – its high conservation value, its culture and history, and some early indications of local support for the idea. An NMCA could help provide the Digby Neck and Islands with opportunities for ecotourism and growth in local businesses, encourage sustainable local fisheries; and help diversify the local economy without jeopardizing the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

CPAWS-NS will interact closely with the research group conducting the Bay of Fundy study, providing input on Digby Neck and Islands, highlighting the ecological importance of the area. As long as there's strong community ownership and involvement in the process from the start, as well as effective communication and education, many key elements for a successful NMCA establishment will remain present in this area.

An opportunity now exists in the Bay of Fundy for the creation of a National Marine Conservation Area and CPAWS-NS will continue to work closely with local communities and stakeholders, in the Digby Neck and Islands region, as the Parks Canada study gets underway.

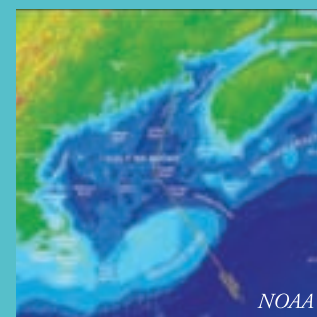


Scott Leslie

Marine Notes

Georges Bank moratorium extended

CPAWS-NS applauds the recent announcement by the Governments of Nova Scotia and Canada to extend the moratorium on oil and gas exploration and drilling on Georges Bank. The moratorium was extended until the year 2015.



Georges Bank is an important ecosystem sustaining significant fishing grounds worth hundreds of millions of dollars to the Canadian economy. It is not the kind of place where we should be taking needless risks associated with oil and gas development, particularly in light of the current ecological disaster still unfolding in the Gulf of Mexico.

New offshore marine protected area closer to reality

Initial public consultations for a proposed new marine protected area on the Eastern Scotian Shelf have now wrapped up. The Department of Fisheries and Oceans was receiving feedback on three sites in the offshore of importance for conservation. An announcement about which site will be selected as the next marine protected area is expected shortly.

Conservation notes

Missed opportunity

The Nova Scotia government failed to acquire an ecologically significant property on Aylesford Lake, Kings County, owned by Wagner Forestry Ltd. These lands, about 1,000 hectares in size, contain significant red pine forest and lake frontage, and occurs adjacent to the site of the future Brigadoon Village; a state-of-the-art wilderness camp facility that will be built on the shores of Aylesford Lake for sick and terminally-ill children from across Atlantic Canada (www.brigadoonvillage.org).

CPAWS was calling on the provincial government to acquire the adjacent lands owned by Wagner Forestry Ltd., which were for sale on the internet as prime cottage country, so that the wilderness camp would always have wilderness nearby. Despite the \$75 million that was budgeted by the Nova Scotia to acquire private lands from the forest companies this year, the province could not reach an agreement for the purchase of the lands on Aylesford Lake. We hope that the provincial government will continue to pursue this important land acquisition, since it will have the dual benefit of protecting an ecologically-significant ecosystem while also providing a wilderness stomping grounds for children who will be visiting Brigadoon.

Wilderness Aid

CPAWS Nova Scotia would like to extend a sincere thank you to the students of Saint Mary's University for their generosity and hard-work carrying out the second annual Wilderness Aid in support of our conservation work. A big thank you to Saint Mary's University Environmental Society (SMUES). In February, on a cold winter day, a team of adventurous students donned snowshoes and ventured off into Nova Scotia's wilderness in the name of conservation. Almost \$1000 was raised to support CPAWS Nova Scotia.



Christian LaForce

Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes wilderness threatened

The Halifax Regional Municipality appears to be backing away from its promise to protect the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes wilderness, near Halifax, as a regional wilderness park. In 2006, the city passed a 25-year regional plan to guide future development in the municipality and to identify green space for the citizens of Halifax. That plan identifies the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes wilderness as a prime site for a new regional park and states that the city will work over time to acquire those lands for conservation. The area, featured in the last issue of *WildEast*, is significant for its vast forests, interconnected lakes, and recreational opportunities only 10km from downtown Halifax.

Although the provincial government has placed a protected wilderness area designation on the public lands of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes, the City has yet to hold up its end of the bargain. Now a development proposal is making its way through City Hall proposing high- and medium-density residential and commercial development on lands identified as a future wilderness park. If you'd like to help out, please visit our website action centre for Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes and send a message to City Hall (www.cpawsns.org/action).

Make your voice heard

The Nova Scotia government has promised to protect the public lands within and near the Chignecto Game Sanctuary as a legally-protected wilderness area.

This is an important commitment made by the provincial government to protect one of the last remaining intact forests in Nova Scotia, with important habitat for mainland moose, wood turtle, northern goshawk, Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic salmon, and peregrin falcon.

But, the final boundaries of the proposed wilderness area have not yet been determined and remain vulnerable to industrial activities, such as clearcutting, open-pit mining, and seismic testing. Please take a moment to help out.

If protecting Chignecto is important to you, please tell the Premier that you want ALL of the public lands of Chignecto protected as a wilderness area.

Honourable Darrell Dexter
Premier of Nova Scotia
Office of the Premier
P.O. Box 726
Halifax, Nova Scotia
B3J 2T3

Email: premier@gov.ns.ca



Irwin Barrett

COME JOIN US! CPAWS Nova Scotia Annual General Meeting

Guest speaker: Dr. Hugh Broders

Room 5001, Rowe Building, Dalhousie University
6100 University Ave., Halifax
June 29th, 5:30pm

Chris Miller

CPAWS-NS would like to gratefully acknowledge our many individual supporters and thank the following funding organizations for their generous contributions to our success last year.



www.cpawsns.org

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Why join?

It's easy - no cheque-writing or monthly stamps
It's more cost-effective - less administrative costs
And, it helps us protect wilderness year-round!

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