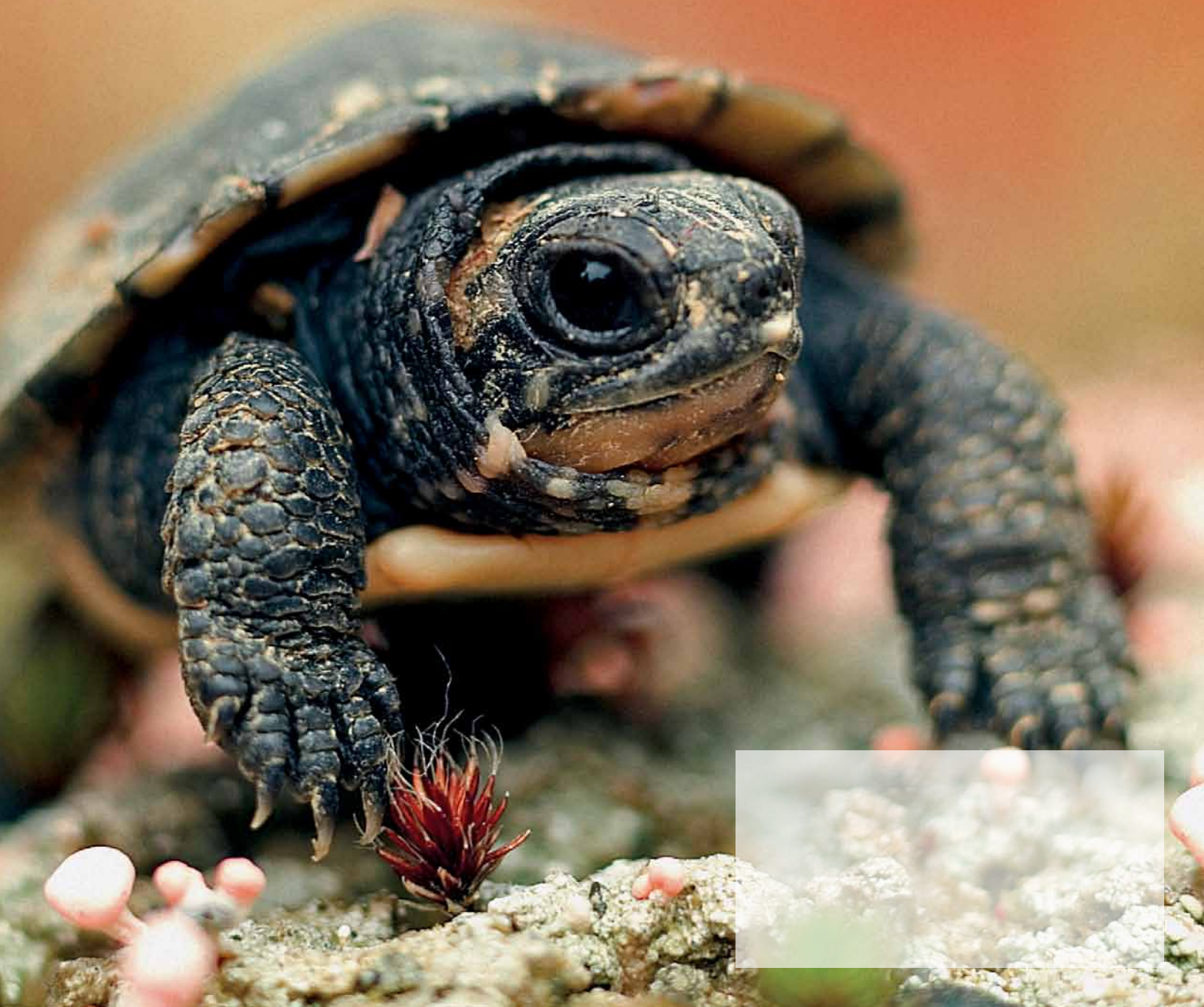


# Born to be Wild

## Celebrating our National Parks





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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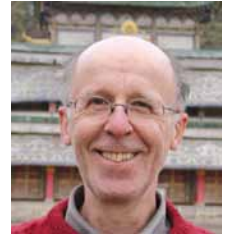
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## Message from the Board

Welcome to the Fall 2011 issue of *WildEast!* On the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of Parks Canada, this newsletter is focused mostly on our national parks. After a hundred years of service, Parks Canada is now responsible for 36 National Parks, 6 National Park Reserves, 4 National Marine Conservation Areas, and 167 National Historic Sites. Through the dedication and persistence of its staff, Parks Canada has earned an international reputation for being good stewards of these areas.



There is still a lot to be done, however. Parks Canada has mapped 39 natural regions in Canada, but only 28 currently include national parks. Only 3 of the nation's 29 marine regions contain national marine conservation areas. While some of the larger national parks in remote places have been relatively well conserved, some of the smaller southern parks that attract a lot of visitors have suffered. PEI National Park is an outstanding example. With over 850,000 visitors annually, it is no wonder that Parks Canada recently noted "Growing tourism pressures add to the challenge of maintaining its ecological integrity." All of the parks in the Maritimes region face similar, albeit lesser, challenges.

Nevertheless, we look forward with optimism. An agreement is now in place between the federal and Nova Scotia governments to create Sable Island National Park Reserve very soon. For the Bay of Fundy, increased attention from the Seven Natural Wonders competition has raised awareness of the need for a National Marine Conservation Area. At the provincial level, we continue to track progress towards protecting 12% of Nova Scotia's landmass and celebrate the creation of Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area.

On a personal note, I have taken on the position of President and Chair of the Board of CPAWS-NS for a second time. I carried out this role previously during 2001 to 2003 when the chapter was at a crucial turning point of moving from an entirely volunteer group to fledging into a chapter with an office and full-time staff. At the beginning of 2001, we represented the entire Atlantic region, but now we have CPAWS chapters in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland.

The Board is very grateful to all those who have made donations to help CPAWS-NS in our work to raise awareness about wilderness and parks, and conserve these precious and magnificent places. We welcome volunteers who would like to help the chapter carry out its work.

Sincerely and with best regards to all friends and supporters of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society.

Martin Willison



## About the cover

A baby Blanding's turtle, Kejimikujik National Park. Keji is working to bring back this species from the edge of extinction through habitat protection and captive breeding (Photo: Dale Wilson).





*Irwin Barrett*

*Sunset over Susies Lake in the Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area, near Halifax*

# In this issue

## Conservation

- More protected areas • 4  
Nova Scotia government makes progress
- National Parks • 7  
Celebrating 100 years of Parks Canada
- Sable Island • 14  
Another chapter in a long history
- Five Bridge Lakes • 16  
Large new protected area near Halifax

## Updates

- 2 • Message from the Board  
Chapter news
- 6 • Conservation notes  
News from across Nova Scotia
- 12 • Favourite parks  
Stories from our national parks
- 18 • Get outdoors!  
A busy season in the wilderness



# More protected areas planned

By: Chris Miller

**The Nova Scotia government plans to significantly expand its system of protected areas over the next few years. A suite of high-priority sites has been identified and is being considered for protection, including some of the best-remaining old-growth forest, coastal sites, and species-at-risk habitat in the province.**

**T**he Nova Scotia government continues to make progress toward its goal of protecting twelve percent of Nova Scotia's landmass by the year 2015. At the moment, only about nine percent of the provincial landmass is legally-protected.

Over the summer, the government released a map showing hundreds of high-priority sites under consideration for new protected areas.

---

*Above: A waterfall near St. Mary's River, Guysborough County (photo: Irwin Barrett)*

*Right: Bear prints on the beach (photo: Chris Miller)*

A total of 221,000 hectares of land has been identified as high-conservation value, from which the Nova Scotia government says it will protect 189,000 hectares. An extensive public and stakeholder consultation session is currently underway.

CPAWS has been directly involved in the selection of these high-priority areas and strongly encourages their official protection as new nature reserves and protected wilderness areas. Included in the package of high-priority sites are some of the best remaining tracts of wilderness in the province, including large intact forests, long stretches of wilderness coastline, important species-at-risk habitat, old-growth forests, rare ecosystems, and sites adjacent to existing protected areas.



The list is quite impressive. Some of the areas recommended for protection include Eastern Shore Islands, Humes River watershed near Bras d'Or Lakes, Kelly's Mountain, large intact forests in the Cobequids, river frontage on the St. Mary's River and Liscomb River, and important coastal plain flora sites in southwestern Nova Scotia.

When completed, this will be the largest expansion of the protected areas system in Nova Scotia since the late 1990's. It also represents the best opportunity to safeguard the last remaining wilderness sites in the province before it's too late.

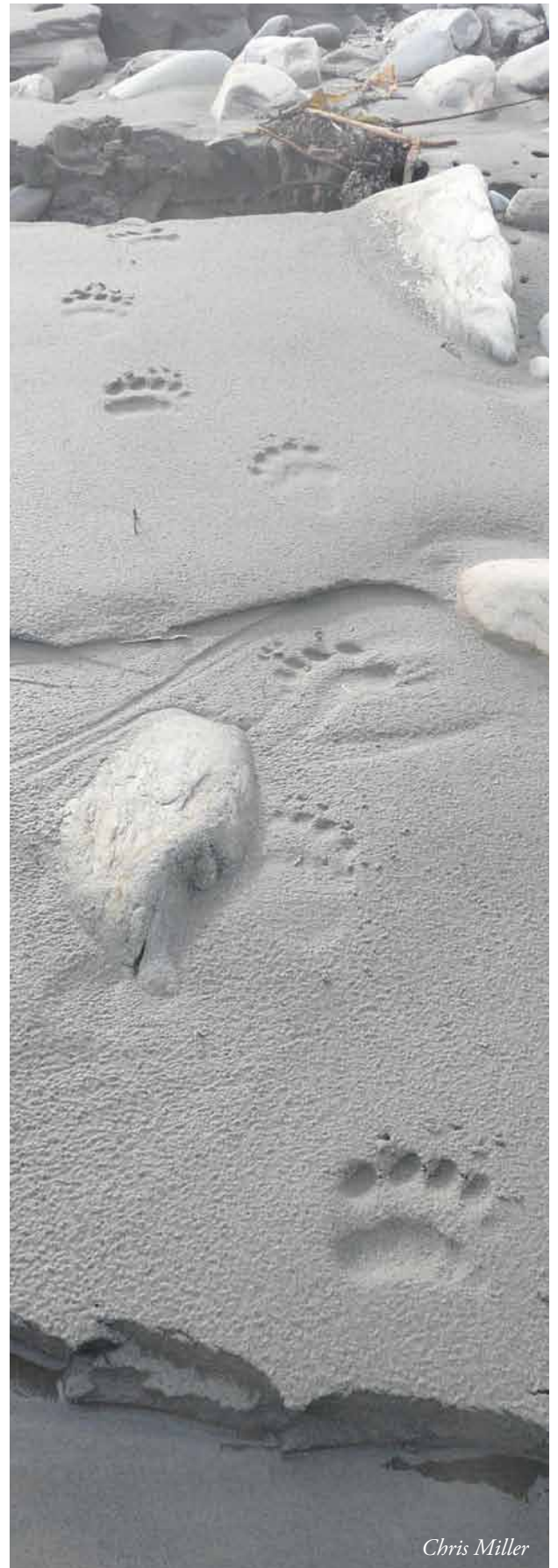
Over the past decade, almost a half million hectares of forest in Nova Scotia have been clearcut, and the problem is getting worse. A study by Global Forest Watch Canada last year showed that Nova Scotia's forests are badly fragmented with roads and clearcuts, with only 17% of the province's forest remaining in pieces larger than 500 hectares in size. That is one of the lowest percentages of any province in Canada.

That will come as no surprise to anyone who has spent time travelling on Nova Scotia's backroads. Our forests just cannot sustain the level of harvesting that has been happening in this province for too long. It's getting to the point where the mere existence of large wilderness areas in Nova Scotia itself is at stake. Time is running out to protect these places.

CPAWS is pleased to play a leading role in the creation of new protected areas in Nova Scotia. We thank everyone for their continued support of our organization as we push to greatly expand the system of protected areas in Nova Scotia. And, we hope you will take a moment to write a letter of support to the province welcoming the new proposed protected areas (send email to [protectedareas@gov.ns.ca](mailto:protectedareas@gov.ns.ca)).

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For a complete listing of the high value conservation sites under evaluation, including detailed map, check out: [www.gov.ns.ca/nse/12percent/](http://www.gov.ns.ca/nse/12percent/)



*Chris Miller*

# Conservation notes

## Nova Scotia invests in strategic land purchases

The Nova Scotia government has announced that it will invest \$6.5 million in the upcoming fiscal year for strategic land purchases for conservation. The funding will be earmarked for the Nova Scotia Department of Environment and will result in the creation of new, or expanded, protected areas.

This is welcome news in a province where only 30% of the landmass is publicly-owned, and where many ecologically-significant ecosystems occur on private land.

The funding will enable the government to purchase lands in 2012-13 and help the Nova Scotia government achieve its target of protecting 12% of the provincial landmass by 2015.

Over the past several years, the Nova Scotia government has invested considerable dollars toward land purchases, which has resulted in at least 70,000 hectares of ecologically-significant properties being acquired in all corners of the province.

## Chignecto nears protection

The Nova Scotia government is making good progress toward protecting the vast forests of Chignecto with the creation of two new legally-protected wilderness areas. Earlier this year, the candidate boundaries for the two protected areas were released, recommending for protection approximately 25,000 hectares of public land. Raven Head Wilderness Area will protect a long stretch of undeveloped coastline along the Bay of Fundy, and the Kelley River Wilderness Area will protect the intact forests further inland, including the significant majority of the Chignecto Game Sanctuary.

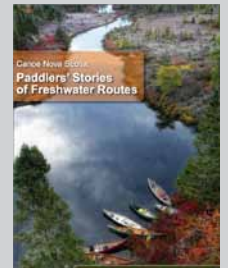
An independent assessment of the candidate protected area boundaries by Global Forest Watch Canada shows that the proposal captures approximately 54% of the large intact forests that remain in the Chignecto region; however a significant amount of intact forest remains outside of the proposed boundary. Through the public review process, CPAWS is calling on the Nova Scotia government to protect an additional 4,800 hectares of land, including the top of the headwaters of Kelley River and Sand River, which were left outside of the candidate protected area boundaries. To properly protect these watersheds, the headwaters must remain intact.

## New wilderness canoe book available

A new booklet about wilderness canoeing in Nova Scotia is now available online free of charge (Canoe Nova Scotia: Paddlers' Stories of Freshwater Routes). A copy can be downloaded off the CPAWS-NS website ([www.cpawsns.org](http://www.cpawsns.org)).

The brain-child of Paul Shakotko, the new booklet describes seventeen wilderness canoe routes across Nova Scotia, written from the perspectives of ten different authors. Each route is described in first-person and details a particular voyage taken somewhere in the province.

Some of the routes described include Birch Cove Lakes, Clyde Headwaters, Kejimikujik loop, Liscomb River, River Inhabitants, Tangier Grand, and Wildcat River. CPAWS is pleased to have been one of the sponsors.





# Celebrating our National Parks



*Dale Wilson*

**Parks Canada is celebrating its 100th birthday as the world's first parks service. Here in the Maritimes, we have many impressive national parks. In this issue, we explore our national parks, discuss the importance of ecological integrity, and ponder the important role Parks Canada has played in protecting our natural heritage. Let's take a moment to reflect on our magnificent national parks and commit ourselves to protecting them for future generations.**



# Maintaining Canada's national parks "unimpaired for future generations"

By: Alison Woodley

**Over the past 15 years, Parks Canada has made significant progress in managing national parks to protect ecological integrity. As we mark the Agency's 100th birthday, how do we ensure that we keep moving in the right direction?**

**N**ational parks are cherished symbols of our shared identity as Canadians, protecting many of our most iconic natural landscapes like Banff, Nahanni, Fundy, and Cape Breton Highlands. In 1963, CPAWS (then known as the National and Provincial Parks Association of Canada) was created to catalyze a strong public voice to defend our parks from inappropriate development.

For almost 50 years, we have been Canada's nation-wide public voice for parks, supporting the creation of new parks and working to ensure that conservation is always the first priority in the park management.

Since the first *National Parks Act* was passed in 1930, the idea of maintaining our parks "unimpaired for future generations" has been the guiding principle for park management. But as managers struggled over the decades to juggle development pressures, both inside and outside park boundaries, putting this "unimpaired" ideal into practice was easier said than done.

Early park management practices didn't always align with our modern understanding of ecosystem conservation. For example, in the early days of park management, predators like wolves were often considered to be "bad" because they preyed on other "good" wildlife like deer and elk, and were killed; an idea that flies in the face of today's understanding of the important role predators play in maintaining healthy ecosystems.

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*Above: Cape Breton Highlands National Park (Dale Wilson)*



Not until the 1970's did "ecological integrity" start to emerge as a scientifically grounded idea that could help implement the "unimpaired" principle required in the Act in a real and measurable way. In 1988, the requirement to manage national parks to maintain or restore ecological integrity was embedded in the *National Parks Act*.

But problems persisted and many Canadians were becoming increasingly concerned that our treasured national parks weren't actually being managed for ecological integrity. Nowhere was this more evident than in Banff National Park in the 1990's, where the pressure of commercial development had caused a serious decline in the health of the park's ecosystems.

As CPAWS and other conservation groups raised awareness of the crisis facing Canada's most famous park, public concern grew to a crescendo, and in 1994, the federal government appointed the Banff-Bow Valley Task Force to investigate and make recommendations on how to ensure Banff's natural values were maintained. The resulting report not only documented the seriousness of environmental problems facing Banff, it also raised questions as to whether other national parks across Canada were under threat as well.

In 1998, the federal government appointed a blue ribbon panel of experts, the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks, to assess the state of all of Canada's national parks, and to make recommendations on how to protect them for the future. The Panel concluded that ecological integrity in Canada's national parks was under serious threat and that these threats to Canada's "national sacred places" presented a crisis of national importance.

The panel presented the federal government with a suite of recommendations to address this crisis, which included the need to build a strong conservation culture throughout Parks Canada; integrate stronger science into decision-making; more actively manage national park ecosystems; strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal peoples; improve public awareness and support for ecological integrity; and encourage meaningful park experiences that don't compromise park ecological integrity.

## Ecological integrity first

More than a decade has passed since the Ecological Integrity Panel presented its findings, and there is no doubt that significant progress has been made towards implementing the recommendations. The *National Parks Act* has been amended to clarify once-and-for-all that ecological integrity is the first priority in park management.

Parks Canada has developed a science-based ecological monitoring and reporting program that is now being implemented across the national park system. More ecosystem scientists have been hired by the Agency to conduct inventories and research, to measure the health of park ecosystems, and to lead efforts to restore ecological integrity.

Parks Canada is also developing new innovative approaches to measuring ecosystem health, for example partnering with the Canadian Space Agency to track the state of our parks in the face of global climate change. Fire has been brought back to parks where it had been suppressed for decades. Wildlife species that had disappeared from parks are being reintroduced.

## What is ecological integrity?

An ecosystem is considered to have ecological integrity when it has all of its parts (ie. all its native species) and all of its processes and structures intact. The concept provides a framework for measuring the health of ecosystems and for acting to restore ecosystems where their integrity has been impaired.

The Agency continues its work to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal peoples. An adaptive management system has been created that integrates the "state of the park" reporting directly into park management planning.

Despite these and other significant steps forward, the challenge of maintaining and restoring ecological integrity remains daunting. Many of our national parks are ecological "islands" nested in highly disturbed landscapes and are too small to protect healthy ecosystems on their own. For example, so stark is the contrast in the landscape between Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park's forests and the surrounding agricultural lands that the park boundary can easily be seen from outer space. A similar situation exists for Fundy National Park in New Brunswick, where intensive clearcuts come right up to the park border.

Protecting the ecological integrity of these "island parks" requires close collaboration with partners to manage the broader landscape in a way that supports the health of park ecosystems. Parks need to be connected together across the landscape so that wide-ranging wildlife can move between these protected spaces.

And even parks that are located in relatively intact landscapes, like in Canada's north, are subject to the impacts of global stressors like climate change.

## A push to increase visitors

More recently, Parks Canada has turned its attention to engaging more Canadians in our national parks, with the goal of ensuring a long term constituency of support for our parks. Encouraging Canadians to connect with nature in order to build a culture of conservation in Canada is a priority that CPAWS shares, so long as it doesn't threaten the ecological integrity of our parks.

While Parks Canada is investing in many projects that promote "nature-focused" activities, such as learn-to-camp programs across the country, CPAWS is noticing a worrying shift towards activities that require new infrastructure, particularly proposals from commercial operators for "pay-for-use" recreational activities.

This is particularly true for some of Canada's more high profile parks. In Jasper National Park, a commercial tour operator is proposing to build a massive glass-bottomed viewing platform at a pull-off along the Icefields Parkway.

And a recent decision by Parks Canada to allow for large scale summer use at the Mount Norquay ski hill in Banff is raising serious concern about the impact thousands more summer visitors would have on grizzly bears and other wildlife that rely on the area as important summer habitat and as a corridor to move up and down the Bow Valley.

## Ecological integrity in our national parks

### Kejimikujik National Park

In Kejimikujik National Park, local volunteers are helping to restore a population of endangered Blanding's turtles, taking on activities like screening nests to protect eggs from predators, protecting road-side nesting turtles, and helping incubate and rear turtles for release into the park. At Kejimikujik Seaside, work is underway to restore habitat for the piping plover, as well as to control a hyper-abundant population of invasive green crabs in nearshore waters.

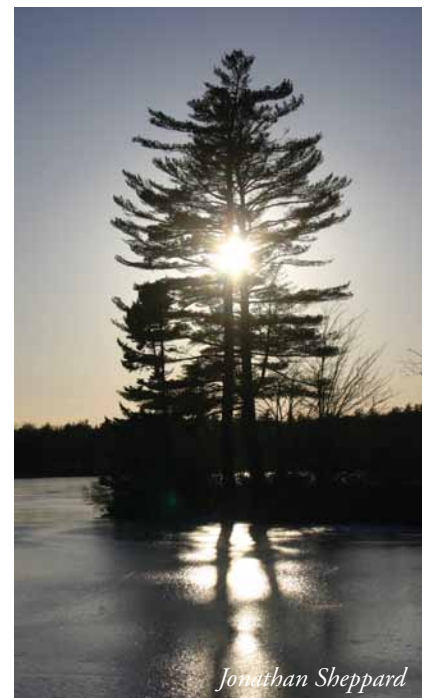
### Cape Breton Highlands National Park

In Cape Breton Highlands National Park, research is underway to try to better understand impacts of the moose population on forest revegetation. The moose in Cape Breton were introduced, unlike the mainland moose of Nova Scotia which are native and endangered. Parks Canada is also helping to augment the American marten population, which is a rare species in Nova Scotia.

Protecting the ecological integrity of our parks is a job that requires long term focus and commitment, from Parks Canada, and from all Canadians. As Parks Canada increases its efforts to connect Canadians with our natural heritage, we all need to be vigilant to ensure that we keep our eye firmly on the ecological integrity imperative. We don't want to inadvertently slide back down a slippery slope of managing our national parks as playgrounds in beautiful settings, rather than as sacred places where nature is cherished and protected.

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*Alison Woodley is the National Conservation Director for CPAWS.*



*Jonathan Sheppard*



# National Parks of the Maritimes



*Parks Canada*

**With the creation of Sable Island National Park Reserve pending, very soon there will be six national parks in the Maritime provinces. Together, these parks protect some of our best remaining natural areas for future generations. Each touches the ocean and includes spectacular stretches of wilderness coastline. They also contain important ecosystems and species-at-risk in need of protection.**

## **Kejimikujik National Park**

Size: 404km<sup>2</sup>  
Year established: 1974  
Natural region: Atlantic Coastal Uplands  
Description: Vast inland forests; rugged coastline at Keji seaside  
Visitors per year: 44,000  
Species-at-risk: Blanding's turtle, piping plover  
Interesting fact: Also designated National Historic Site

## **Cape Breton Highlands National Park**

Size: 949km<sup>2</sup>  
Year established: 1936  
Natural region: Maritime Acadian Highlands  
Description: Steep slopes; highland plateau; rugged coastline  
Visitors per year: 250,000  
Species-at-risk: Bicknell's thrush, Canada lynx, American marten  
Interesting fact: First National Park in Atlantic Canada

## **Sable Island National Park Reserve**

Size: 34km<sup>2</sup>  
Year established: pending  
Natural region: Atlantic Coastal Uplands  
Description: Remote sandy island offshore  
Visitors per year: <100  
Species-at-risk: Ipswich savannah sparrow, roseate tern  
Interesting fact: Largest colony of grey seals in the world

## **Prince Edward Island National Park**

Size: 22km<sup>2</sup>  
Year established: 1937  
Natural region: Maritime Plain  
Description: Long coastline; barriers/dunes/beaches  
Visitors per year: 887,000  
Species-at-risk: Piping plover, Gulf of St. Lawrence aster  
Interesting fact: Government acquiring lands to expand park

## **Fundy National Park**

Size: 207km<sup>2</sup>  
Year established: 1948  
Natural region: Maritime Acadian Highlands  
Description: Coastal forests; vast coastline; high tides  
Visitors per year: 250,000  
Species-at-risk: Inner Bay of Fundy salmon, peregrine falcon  
Interesting fact: Part of Upper Bay of Fundy Biosphere Reserve

## **Kouchibouguac National Park**

Size: 238km<sup>2</sup>  
Year established: 1969  
Natural region: Maritime Plain  
Description: Coastal forests; long barrier beaches  
Visitors per year: 220,000  
Species-at-risk: Piping plover, wood turtle, short-eared owl  
Interesting fact: Second largest tern colony in North America

# Cape Breton Highlands National Park

By: Darin Ruangruchira

I've never seen so much snow before. It's piled high on either side of the road, much higher than our vehicle. I'm in Cape Breton Highlands National Park. I was here once before, but it was summertime, and things look much different this time of year.

Everything is so white and the sky so blue. It's beautiful. The trees are covered with thick layers of ice and snow, all twisted out of shape and just barely poking through the very high snow pack.

My husband and I head out on a short hike near French Lake. We climb up onto the snow and are able to walk on top of it without falling through, moving from tree-top to tree-top as we go.

There are animal tracks everywhere. We follow them as we make our way to the far end of the frozen lake, buried deep in snow.

I've only been in Canada a few years but have been fortunate enough to visit almost a dozen national parks already. Cape Breton Highlands National Park is one of my favourites.

The views are incredible here, and there are plenty of hiking trails to enjoy. I especially like the blueberries on top of Mount Franey in the summer. And the moose are kind of cool too.

Back atop the deep snow at French Lake, the day is starting to come to an end. We watch the sun slip below the plateau and turn into a beautiful sunset. It's awesome.

After that we head into Cheticamp, eat some great food, and enjoy the Mi-Carême festivities.

On that trip, I learned that national parks are places you can enjoy any time of the year.

---

*Darin is a volunteer at CPAWS-NS and has travelled all over the backwoods of Nova Scotia.*





# Kejimikujik National Park



**By: Amanda Lavers**

*Jonathan Sheppard*

**K**ejimikujik. For me, there is a softness to the word and to the place. A softness that is partly in my heart and partly in the way my head understands the place. Keji is warm, sheltered, underlain by soft slates, canopied by feathery hemlocks. It is the land of the fairy people. Of ancient canoe routes, sinewy moose hides, and plump cranberries.

It's a place that draws people in. And holds them tight. It captivates not with magnificence (like Gros Morne, Jasper, or Nahanni) but with its detail and richness. Its dark, broody waters and its diversity of coastal plain flora. Its rich glacial till and deep accumulated peatlands. Pine trees that seem to stretch to the clouds and tiny mushrooms that peak out of mossy layers of greenery. Abundance that fed the bellies and spirits of aboriginal peoples, sports and guides, modern-day campers, and those of us who now live in the "middle of everywhere."

I first fell in love with Keji as a youngster who travelled here to ski, bike, and canoe with friends and family. As a young adult, I moved to the town of Caledonia to work as a park naturalist. I volunteered for many years with CPAWS-NS and later began working with the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute next door to Keji.

I have tried to be an advocate for the area's unique diversity of turtles and snakes, its amazing old mixedwood forests with blackburnian and northern parula warblers, and its small towns full of resourceful and interesting people with amazing stories.

I'm not the only one. I've witnessed some interesting designations in the last ten years: the Southwest Nova Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO, National Historic Site by Parks Canada, and most recently, DarkSky Preserve by the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada.

All of these new titles are well deserved. Keji is a very special place both from a human and a natural perspective. I've been amazed at the way people celebrate and love this place. I can't be entirely naive about Keji's softness. No one who has tried to paddle back across Peskowsk Lake on a cold May weekend with the wind howling in their ears can ignore that there are fierce natural forces at play even here. But there is little that should keep you from taking advantage of every opportunity to make your way inland to discover Keji's starry nights. Whether it's a sunny day in February with your ice skates or a blistering hot summer week in your bathing suit, I hope you'll head in this direction and indulge in some eway-goey Keji goodness. It takes a little while to sink in; you may have to make a few trips.

---

*Amanda is a long-time volunteer of CPAWS-NS and a former board member*

# Sable Island announced as national park reserve

By: Chris Miller, Zoe Lucas, and Mark Butler

*The following article was published in The Chronicle-Herald on Saturday, Oct. 22, 2011.*

Sable Island will soon become a national park. Earlier this week, an agreement was signed between the federal and Nova Scotia governments that clears the way for legislation to be introduced to make the park official.

This is an important step for the protection of Sable Island and will result in the creation of the first new national park established in Nova Scotia in over a half-century.

Sable Island is a place where we need to minimize human impacts on the ecosystem. That's easier said than done. Visitation to the island has been increasing in recent years, and many of these visits are for commercial enterprises.

With these increasing demands, it is clear that environmental protection and conservation of ecological values are now far beyond the normal scope of the Canadian Coast Guard responsibilities.

The existing regulations governing the island are embedded in the *Canada Shipping Act* and are over a century old. A better management model is needed to look after the island, a model that has conservation as its primary goal.

This is where the national park comes in. The *National Parks Act* requires national parks to be managed for ecological integrity first. That means, by law, Parks Canada cannot allow activities that will damage wildlife or ecosystems in national parks.

It is the best tool that we have in this country, at the federal level, for protecting wild spaces. A comprehensive, long-term, and enforceable conservation strategy for Sable Island is now finally within reach.

Challenges remain. National parks are also places where Parks Canada is required to provide visitor experiences and bring the story of each national park to all Canadians. There will be pressure to increase visitation to Sable Island beyond the few hundred who currently visit there each year.

Parks Canada must be cautious about this, recognizing that a unique solution is needed for Sable Island. Options exist.





Parks Canada can cap the number of visitors allowed each year, and limit when and where visitors can go on the island. They can also focus visitor experiences primarily off-island, by developing a showcase pavilion or a well designed visitor interpretation centre on the mainland.

This will help tell Sable Island's story to the Canadian public without focusing on physically travelling to the island itself.

In the coming months, as legislation is introduced to officially create the national park, attention will turn to the development of a park management plan. This is where the details can be worked out on how best to ensure ecological integrity.

The valuable scientific research that has been conducted on the island must continue. Many of these datasets go back decades, and provide important baselines for understanding how the island and its surroundings are changing over time.

The research station on Sable Island has been threatened with closure on more than one occasion. With the national park designation, it is now Parks Canada's responsibility to ensure the valuable scientific research on the island continues.

On the issue of oil and gas exploration, the federal and provincial governments have announced that they will amend the legislation associated with the Offshore Accord to ban drilling from the surface of the island out to one nautical mile. This is an important step, but it should be expanded to include the sub-surface rights as well.



*Well known for its wild horses, Sable Island is also significant for the largest sand dunes in eastern North America, the largest breeding colony of grey seals in the world, an important migratory bird stopover. It is also home to several species-at-risk, including the roseate tern and the only breeding location in the world for the Ipswich savannah sparrow (Photos: Sable Island Green Horse Society).*



As it now stands, an oil company could set up a drilling rig beyond one nautical mile and drill horizontally to reach gas under Sable Island. This loophole needs to be closed. Governments and the oil companies have already come to agreement on surface rights, a similar agreement for subsurface rights would be very welcome.

Many of you have already let the government know how much you care about Sable Island. As Parks Canada develops the management plan your participation will once again be crucial.

We must take care of Sable for future generations so they too can wonder at its remoteness, its charm, and natural treasures. The future for Sable Island is looking brighter. Let's ensure that continues.

\*\*\*

*Chris Miller, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society*

*Zoe Lucas, Sable Island Green Horse Society*

*Mark Butler, Ecology Action Centre*





## Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area

Large tract of public land near Halifax receives protected area status

By: Chris Miller

**I**t's now official. The public lands at Five Bridge Lakes have been formally designated as a legally-protected wilderness area by the Nova Scotia government. This designation means that these lands will forever remain in a wilderness state and won't be fragmented by sprawling development that has claimed so much forest around Halifax.

Located on the Chebucto Peninsula, west of downtown Halifax, the new protected area will conserve 8,600 hectares of land. This large, continuous block of public land covers a rolling landscape of granite barrens, peatlands, and conifer forest.

In the southern part of the new protected area, there are a couple of stands of older red oak and red spruce forest, growing on the more fertile and better drained drumlins left over from the last glaciation. These areas stand out as islands of rich forest in a sea of a more rugged and barren landscape.

---

*Above: A paddler makes his way through the Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area (photo: Chris Miller)*



The Five Bridge Lakes wilderness is also very important for the endangered mainland moose, providing core habitat for the Chebucto Peninsula population. Moose numbers on the peninsula have dwindled in recent years and the population is at risk of extirpation.

The new protected area is also significant for its wilderness recreation opportunities, including an exceptional wilderness canoe route through the heart of the new protected area from the communities of Hubley to Blind Bay, as well as The Bluff Trail, one of the best backcountry wilderness hiking trails close to Halifax.

In 2009, the Nova Scotia government committed to protecting the public lands at Five Bridge Lakes and, since that time, has carried out extensive public consultations, as well as a socio-economic assessment.

The designation leaves a couple of roads through the protected area available for motorized vehicle use. CPAWS is concerned about the potential impacts of off-highway vehicle use on the endangered mainland moose population in these areas. We encourage the Nova Scotia government to closely monitor this situation and to close any roads at the first sign of any negative impacts on the moose or changes in moose behaviour.

The moose population on the Chebucto Peninsula is extremely low, and impacts to even one or two animals could have significant negative effects on the remaining population.

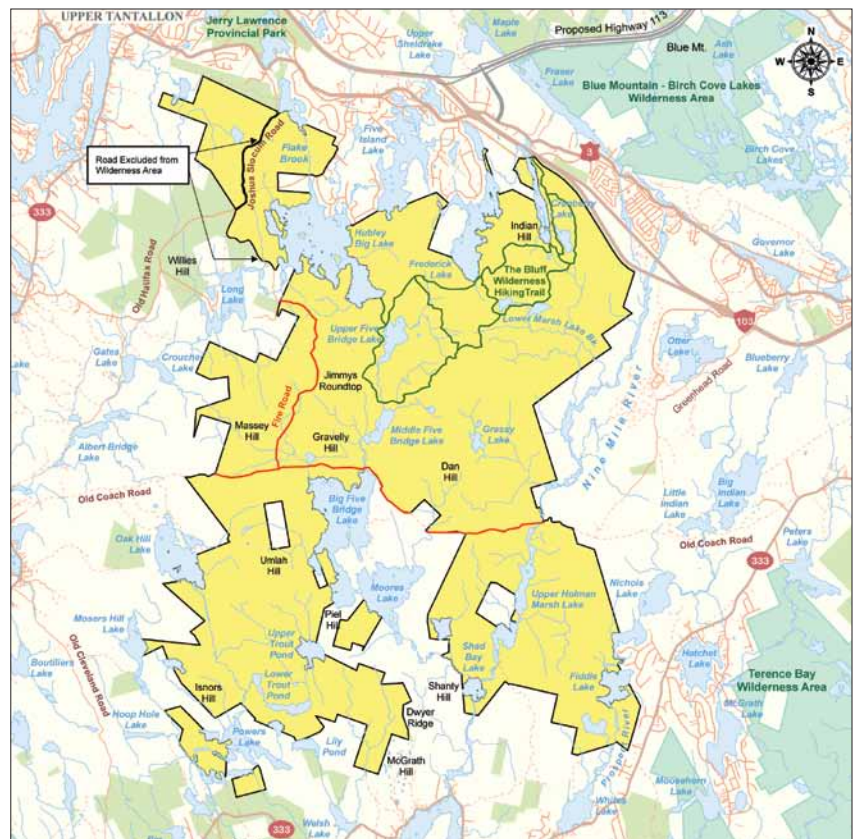
The Chebucto Peninsula now has an important cluster of protected areas, creating a network of wilderness zones at the edge of Halifax city. In addition to the Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area, the Chebucto

Peninsula also supports Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area, Terrence Bay Wilderness Area, Long Lake Provincial Park, Pennant Point Provincial Park, Peggy’s Cove Preservation Area, Western Common Wilderness Common, and a number of smaller sites protected by the St. Margaret’s Bay Stewardship Association and the Nova Scotia Nature Trust.

In addition to these existing protected areas, there are also a number of new protected areas proposed by the Nova Scotia government as part of a package of high conservation value lands for the 12% protected areas target (See: article pg 4). These include public lands proposed for protection along the coastline near Prospect Islands and Prospect High Head, as well as additions to the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area.

The Chebucto Peninsula now supports a world-class system of near-urban protected areas, which in turn is helping to protect vast stretches of forest near the city. This helps make Halifax an attractive place to live, work, and play. Let’s hope this work to protect our near-urban wilderness continues.

CPAWS would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who supported the protection of Five Bridge Lakes. Your work has made a big difference. We particularly want to thank the hard working folks at Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Heritage Trust, Woodens River Environmental Protection Organization, and St. Margaret’s Bay Stewardship Association for their long standing commitment to protect these important lands. Well done.



*Five Bridge Lakes Wilderness Area shown in yellow (NS Environment)*

# Get outdoors! Enjoy nature

By: Andrew Chow

It was a busy (and successful) season here at CPAWS-NS, getting people into the great outdoors to learn about nature conservation.

Through our annual Nature Calls! program, we participated in a whole bunch of outdoor activities.

We partnered with Big Brothers Big Sisters to get urban youth into the wilderness to experience nature in new and exciting ways.



Some of the areas we visited were The Bluff Trail, Purcells Pond, Duncans Cove, and Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area.

The kids had a lot of fun, and learned a bit about conservation too. It was great seeing young people really make a connection with nature and become interested in the wilderness around them.

We also hosted a number of outdoor photography events this year. Photography is a powerful tool to convey the importance of wilderness conservation and to learn how to look at nature in a different way.

We led several photography hikes at Thomas Raddall Park, Blomidon, and Porters Lake. For younger groups, we did a photo scavenger hunt looking for the beautiful things nature has to offer. We had a lot of fun with the Indian Point Young Naturalist Club doing this.

Through our partnership with Mountain Equipment Co-op, we joined in the activities for PaddleFest and BikeFest. There was lots of music, a number of outdoor workshops, and activities for kids. It was a fantastic opportunity to discuss our work protecting Chignecto and the Bay of Fundy with people who love being outdoors.

CPAWS-NS also participated in several beach cleanups hosted by Clean Nova Scotia. A few of the sites targeted were Rainbow Haven, Crystal Crescent Beach, and Cleveland Beach. At Rainbow Haven, there was so much garbage, we had to build a makeshift sled to haul it off the beach.

Toward the end of summer, we also ventured down to Kejimikujik Seaside to undertake habitat restoration for piping plovers with staff from Parks Canada. We also participated in the fourth annual WildernessAid hike with the students of Saint Mary's University Environmental Society (SMUES).

Overall, it was a great summer getting outdoors and connecting with lots of people from across the province. It's the best part about working and volunteering with CPAWS-NS.

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*Andrew is a student at Dalhousie University who worked for CPAWS-NS over the summer.*







A photograph of a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a person in an orange jacket standing in the foreground. The forest floor is covered in moss and fallen logs. The text is overlaid on the top left and bottom of the image.

# CPAWS

## Nova Scotia's Voice for Wilderness

**Please help us protect nature**

[www.cpawsns.org](http://www.cpawsns.org)

*Irwin Barrett*