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 **CPAWS**
 CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY
 NOVA SCOTIA CHAPTER

WildEast
 THE NEWSLETTER OF CPAWS NOVA SCOTIA

Protected!

Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes to receive wilderness area designation

By: *Chris Miller, Wilderness Conservation Coordinator*

We did it! After a sustained campaign led by CPAWS-NS that lasted over three years, the provincial government has announced that the public lands of the magnificent Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes area near Halifax will finally be designated as a protected wilderness area.

Protected are 1,350 hectares of public lands on the edge of the city, near the fast growing communities of Rockingham, Clayton Park, and Fairview. This land, which is 20 times larger than Point Pleasant Park, includes over a dozen undeveloped lakes, numerous wetlands and old forest sites, rare arctic-alpine plants, habitat for the endangered mainland moose, and the highest point of land on the Chebucto Peninsula.

The area is also a popular spot for outdoor recreation, particularly hiking, swimming, canoeing, skating, and skiing. It boasts the only canoe loop near the city, where nine lakes can be paddled in a circle in a single afternoon without back-tracking.

Surveys of the Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes area have also identified over 150 different

species of birds in this near-urban wilderness. It truly is an ecological gem that will now be protected as an oasis of nature in the heart of Atlantic Canada's largest city.

CPAWS-NS, along with our friends at the Ecology Action Centre, Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia, Halifax Field Naturalists, and Halifax North West Trails Association, have worked as a (*cont'd p.3*)



Rejected!

Minister says no to quarry on Digby Neck, yes to better coastal management

By *Laura Hussey, Marine Coordinator*

Since 2003, an environmental assessment has been ongoing for a project that would see two million tonnes of rock blasted each year from the coast of Digby Neck and shipped to New Jersey for use as aggregate.

And since that time, many community members, environmental groups, and others have been working hard to make it clear that this project is not a suitable one for the area.

Now, a panel of three independent experts, and provincial Minister of Environment and Labour Mark Parent, have agreed.

The Whites Point Quarry and Marine Terminal Project was proposed by a US-based company to be located on the Bay of Fundy coastline on

the narrow spit of land known as Digby Neck in southwest Nova Scotia. The region is known as a natural treasure and is home to globally significant bird populations, highly productive marine waters, important marine mammal populations including the endangered North Atlantic right whale, and rare and sensitive coastal ecosystems. CPAWS-NS believes this area is a strong candidate to become a National Marine Conservation Area (NMCA), and has been participating in the environmental assessment with a goal of ensuring the important natural values of this area can be maintained.

A three-person panel consisting of experts in geology, oceanography, and regional planning and resource development was tasked with reviewing the environmental assessment and providing (*cont'd p.2*)

President's Message

The year 2007 was a very good one for CPAWS NS, and for Nova Scotia's entire environmental community. The hard work and leadership of CPAWS NS staff and volunteers were driving forces behind an impressive series of announcements made by the Provincial Government this year. These included the establishment of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area and the Shelburne River Wilderness Area as well as the Ship Harbour Long Lake Candidate Wilderness Area and 12 new nature reserves. All told, CPAWS was instrumental in the permanent protection of 12 000 hectares, and interim protection of 14 000 hectares of old forests, wetlands and significant wildlife habitats and ecological features.

Marine conservation efforts also met with significant success, most notably as a result of our strong participation in the environmental assessment of the proposed White's Point Quarry and Marine Terminal. After nearly 5 years, the project was rejected by the Provincial Government, a highly significant victory in the movement to establish coastal and marine environmental protection as a priority for the Province.

In January 2008, Jonathon Feldgajer joined CPAWS as the coordinator of the Nature Calls Education Program, which is in its third year of operation. John is new to Nova Scotia and a valuable addition to the CPAWS team, welcome aboard!

CPAWS has moved to an excellent new office space at 1099 Marginal Rd., heightening a strong professional connection to the Tourism Indus-

try Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS). In addition, a generous private donation allowed us to upgrade our computer systems, while a corporate donation of geographic information system software from the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) in Bedford has significantly enhanced our technical capabilities.

Fostering continued cooperation between Government and stakeholders, and maintaining momentum from 2007 into 2008 is crucial to further progress. With your continued support, our chapter will continue to be on the leading edge of environmental protection in Nova Scotia. In 2008 we plan to focus wilderness conservation efforts on the Chignecto Isthmus and Chignecto Game Sanctuary, and marine conservation efforts on the establishment of a National Marine Conservation Area for Nova Scotia and on increasing awareness and protection of the rare Bay of Fundy horse mussel reefs.

To this end, on behalf of the Board of Directors, the staff and volunteers of CPAWS NS, I thank you dearly for your support in 2007 and welcome it again for the coming year.

Sincerely,



Craig Smith
President

Rejected... (cont'd from p.1)

recommendations to both the federal and provincial environment ministers, who were to make the final decision on this project. After thorough consideration of literally thousands of submissions and reports from government departments, scientists, community members, environmental groups, industry groups, and others on this project, the panel recommended that this project be rejected.

According to the panel, "the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects that ... cannot be justified in the circumstances," and would "lead to irrevocable and undesired changes of quality of life" for the people of Digby Neck. The panel also recommended that the Province of Nova Scotia develop and implement a comprehensive coastal zone management plan, something that is sorely needed to protect our important coastal heritage in all areas of the province from inappropriate developments.

To the delight and relief of CPAWS-NS, on Nov. 20 Minister Parent agreed with the panel's recommendation and formally rejected the Digby quarry project. In addition, the Nova Scotia Speech from the throne on Nov. 22nd included a commitment to put a provincial coastal management framework in place within two years. Both of these statements represent significant steps forward for the protection of Nova Scotia's coast.

CPAWS-NS applauds the panel for providing a strong directive to the ministers on this project, and on sustainable coastal development in

general. Further, we commend the Minister of Environment for following the panel's advice, and making a decision that puts the environment and communities first. We hope that the remainder of the panel's recommendations are given due consideration, and we look forward to seeing progress on an effective coastal management plan for all of Nova Scotia.



The basalt coastline of Brier Island, Digby Neck. Photo: Ian Smith

The Great Barrier Reef of the mussel world – in our own backyard!

By Laura Hussey, Marine Coordinator

When most of us think of reefs, we think of tropical scenes with brightly coloured fish and bikinis. Maybe some of us also think of the beautiful and fascinating forests of deep sea corals found off Nova Scotia's shores. It is unlikely, however, that many people think of mussels.

Usually we associate mussels more with garlic butter than with reefs, but in our own Bay of Fundy, mussels are doing some very impressive things. Large groupings of these molluscs have formed extensive fields of reefs on the seafloor, with each reef measuring about 20m wide, and up to 3m high and 1.2km long. These are the biggest reefs of their kind known to exist anywhere on the planet. So high tides aren't the only unusual feature that the Bay of Fundy has to offer!

The reefs in the Bay of Fundy are formed by horse mussels (*Modiolus modiolus*). Horse mussels are similar to the more familiar blue mussel (the kind that goes well with garlic butter), though horse mussels generally grow to be larger (up to 22cm) with a heavier and more rugged

shell.

The horse mussels in the Bay of Fundy are able to form reefs because sand and mud that is moved across the seafloor by the strong Fundy tidal currents becomes trapped in the byssal threads that mussels use to attach themselves to hard surfaces. As old mussels die and sediment continues to build, new mussels can build upward on top of the growing mounds of sand and mud and mussel shells, all held together by the byssal threads.

The mussel reefs add structural complexity to the seafloor, providing habitat for communities of other organisms. By filtering food out of the water column and providing nutrients to the seafloor in their waste products, the reef mussels also increase local biological productivity. Because of their important ecological roles and because horse mussel reefs of this size are unique to the Bay of Fundy, CPAWS-NS is working to protect them. (*cont'd p. 4*)

Protected... (cont'd from p.1)

coalition to protect Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes. Together, we have taken hundreds of people into this wilderness, including decision-makers at all levels of government. We carried out talks and presentations across the city, generated lots of media attention, gathered over 3000 names on a petition, and demonstrated enough public interest and pressure to push this conservation victory over the top.

The protection of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes was also a hot topic in Province House for the past few years, where it was regularly the focus of much debate, sometimes into the wee hours of the night.

The announcement made by the province means that public lands in the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes area will now be designated using the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*. This piece of legislation excludes damaging activities from designated wilderness areas, such as clearcutting, mining, road building, development, and motor vehicle use, but still allows for a wide range of low impact wilderness recreational activities. The area will become Nova Scotia's 35th officially designated protected wilderness area.

Last year, the Halifax Regional Municipality identified Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes as a high-priority for the creation of a new regional park and subsequently zoned the public lands in this area for conservation. The city has also indicated that it will work to acquire adjacent private lands to fill-in critical areas of the regional park that are not currently protected, including key sites on the wilderness canoe loop, as well as important archaeological areas.

The western boundary of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area is defined by the edge of a corridor for the proposed Highway 113, a project that is currently undergoing an environmental assessment. This proposed road is intended to link Highways 103 and 102 between Hubble and Bedford. Highway 113 has been stalled in the environmental assessment process for 10 years now, something which is no small achievement in itself.

Initially, the provincial government wanted to use Blue Mountain Hill, the highest point of land near the city, as a source of road ballast for the highway. That plan was nixed last year due to overwhelming public opposition to blowing off the top of one of Halifax's most important natural features. Blue Mountain Hill will now be protected inside the boundaries of the wilderness area.

A big thank you to everyone who took the time to stand up and demand that Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes be protected. An important natural legacy has now been left for the people of Halifax.



Chris Miller leads a group of grade seven students from Park West Junior High School in Clayton Park into Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes. The students were very involved with making sure this important natural area near Halifax was protected forever and took the time to write letters to the Premier. Photo: Gary Shupe

CPAWS-NS Shoreline Cleanup a Success

By Laura Hussey, Marine Coordinator

On Sept. 23rd, CPAWS-NS held a cleanup of MacCormack Beach Provincial Park in Eastern Passage as part of the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. We had a great turnout of about 20 enthusiastic participants, including families, students, friends, and politicians. Together, we cleaned over three hectares of coastline and collected 10 bags of garbage and recyclables, plus a few miscellaneous items such as tires, for a grand total of an astonishing 130 pounds of litter!

Some of the stranger items found on the cleanup included a tool box with a screwdriver, part of a large stuffed chair, a pair of fisherman's overalls, and an Empire Theatres gift card. We also found many of the more pervasive 'usual suspects' of shoreline litter, including cigarette butts, disposable coffee cups and other food packaging. At this particular location, spent fireworks were also a significant litter concern.



Some of the cleanup crew. Photo: L. Hussey



MacCormack Beach Provincial Park, Eastern Passage, NS. Photo: L. Hussey

MacCormack's Beach was designated as a park in 1960, and is named after the former property owners. A boardwalk was built in 1993, and it is a popular spot for a stroll among local residents. This small protected beach is accessible by bus, and provides views of MacNab's, Lawlor's and Devil's Islands.

The Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup takes place every year in September at locations across Canada. This year, over 1,200 cleanups took place across the country. Data is collected from all cleanups to help inform ways that shoreline litter can be prevented in different regions. To find out more about the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup, go to www.vanaqua.org/cleanup.

Mussel reefs... (cont'd from p.3)

To do this, we are working with government, industry, and community members to better understand the reefs, the threats facing them, measures that could be taken to protect them, and how these measures could affect the people living and working in the Bay of Fundy region. Ultimately, CPAWS-NS wants to ensure that these magnificent marine features can be maintained. Among the more serious threats that need to be addressed, mussel reefs are vulnerable to physical disturbances to the seafloor such as those created by fishing trawls and dredges. Sonograms of the Bay of Fundy seafloor show linear gouges through the reefs in some areas where trawls have already passed through. In the United Kingdom, smaller horse mussel reefs have sustained more widespread damage of this kind and expensive restoration work is now being undertaken in some areas, however a complete recovery in the near future is unlikely. CPAWS-NS wants to ensure that the Bay of Fundy reefs do not suffer the same fate.

CPAWS-NS also wants to spread the word about this natural marine wonder in our own backyard. We've started by giving a public presentation on the mussel reefs at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History in September, and plan to continue our efforts through additional presentations and other forms of public outreach.

So, the next time you're about to dip a tasty mussel morsel in garlic butter, pause to consider the mighty mussel architects in the Bay of Fundy whose colonies have grown into structures higher than the ceiling in an average room and larger in area than an average city block. Here, on the seafloor in the depths of our Bay of Fundy, the humble horse mussel has created something quite special and worth protecting.

CPAWS-NS wishes to acknowledge support for this work from the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, Mountain Equipment Co-op, and the Sage Environmental Program.

Ship Harbour Long Lake: 14,000 hectares of Eastern Shore wilderness placed under interim protection

By Chris Miller, Wilderness Conservation Coordinator

At a packed reception in Halifax on December 7th, and with much celebration and fanfare, the Premier of Nova Scotia announced that the magnificent Ship Harbour Long Lake wilderness along the Eastern Shore will finally be designated as a protected wilderness area.

14,000 hectares of this rugged wilderness have been deferred from harvesting and a moratorium has been established banning any further resource exploration, exploitation, or development activities in the area. Official designation using the *Wilderness Areas Protection Act* will take place within one-year, after the Province has carried out public consultations and completed a socio-economic study.

The announcement to protect the public lands of Ship Harbour Long Lake as a legally-protected wilderness area came about as the result of a deal struck between a group of environmental organizations (CPAWS-NS, Ecology Action Centre, and Eastern Shore Forest Watch) and the forestry company that maintains cutting rights to the area, Neenah Paper Inc. That agreement laid out a path for the provincial government to declare its intentions to permanently protect the area, which led to the announcement made by the Premier.



Ship Harbour Long Lake Candidate Wilderness Area. Map: NSDEL

“Our company recognizes that this is an important area for conservation and we are pleased to be part of an agreement to allow its consideration for protection.”
Jack Kyte, Neenah Paper.



Photo: Irwin R. Barrett

The area withdrawn from any further resource exploration, exploitation, or development activities includes an expanse of public land centred on the lake which gives Ship Harbour Long Lake its name, and extending west to Admiral Lake near Musquodoboit Harbour and east to Scraggy Lake near Moose River Gold Mines. This includes lands to the west and north of Lake Charlotte.

Included in this large wilderness area are over 50 undeveloped lakes, several major river corridors, hundreds of wetlands, and important stands of old-growth Acadian forest. There are places that have never seen an axe (or chainsaw, or feller-buncher). The area also boasts tremendous backcountry wilderness recreational opportunities, including exceptional canoe routes with impressive scenery, and supports a population of Nova Scotia’s endangered mainland moose.

“I am pleased this will be another new protected area for Halifax Regional Municipality and a boost to the province’s goal of protecting 12 percent of our land mass. I want to thank our non-governmental and industry partners for their co-operation in reaching this agreement.”
Honourable Mark Parent, Minister of Environment and Labour

For far too long, communities along the Eastern Shore have been subjected to heavy industrial forestry practices in their backyards, and exposed to far more than their fair share of clearcuts, which scar the landscape from Musquodoboit Harbour through to Sherbrooke and beyond. (cont'd p.6)

Ship Harbour Long Lake... (cont'd from p.5)

Protecting Ship Harbour Long Lake as a wilderness area will help restore some balance to the landscape, by protecting the largest remaining unfragmented forest in the region. But, clearly there is much more work to do, to permanently protect the magnificent forests, lakes, and rivers of the Eastern Shore.

"Ship Harbour Long Lake is one of the most important natural areas remaining in Nova Scotia, a place where wild rivers still run free and where wildlife still has plenty of room to roam."

Chris Miller, CPAWS-NS

Over the course of the year, the provincial government will be carrying out a series of public workshops and meetings regarding the protection of Ship Harbour Long Lake. Certain special interest groups have already indicated that they think the boundaries of the future protected area at Ship Harbour Long Lake should be changed and made smaller. But, large areas are needed to protect biodiversity over the long-term, to keep the lakes and rivers clean, and to allow for a genuine backcountry wilderness experience. We will need your help to make sure that the entire Ship Harbour Long Lake wilderness is protected.



Photo: Irwin R. Barrett

"Nova Scotians and visitors alike enjoy sport fishing, canoeing, hiking and camping in the Ship Harbour Long Lake area. Because of today's announcement, it's easy to imagine our children and their children enjoying those same pursuits long into the future in a landscape that looks very much as it does today."

Honourable Rodney MacDonald, Premier of Nova Scotia

Nature Calls! 2008 Kicks Off

By Jonathan Feldgajer, Education Coordinator

Hello WildEasterners! My name is Jonathan Feldgajer and I'm pleased to introduce myself as the newest Education Coordinator for CPAWS NS. We have an exciting line-up for 2008 as we kick off the newest season of Nature Calls!, our urban youth wilderness program. This year we are attempting a new approach to the program by running a series of wilderness outings through the course of the next 6 months.

With our group of youth, each month will see a weekend daytrip to a Nova Scotia Park or Wilderness Area that CPAWS has helped protect, or an area that needs our help. Proposed outings include Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes, Ship Harbour-Long Lake and Gully lake. Through activities like wild edible foraging, seaweed collecting, identifying animal tracks or nature photography lessons combined with snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and other outdoor fun, we aim to get outside and see the forests for the trees (and plants and animals, public awareness raising and all other components of wilderness protection). Over the 2008 Nature Calls! season and with the generous support of our funders at Nature Canada and Action for Neighbourhood Change, CPAWS will educate, excite and inspire our youth to take action and get involved.

Any interested readers who would like to help plan or participate in our outings can write me an email at jonathan.feldgajer@gmail.com or call the CPAWS-NS office.

See you in the Wild!

The Big Wild!

By John Glynn-Morris, CPAWS-NS Secretary

In spring 2008, CPAWS and Mountain Equipment Co-op will be launching an exciting new initiative known as The Big Wild. The Big Wild is a social movement intended to mobilize Canadians to demonstrate their support for a bold vision for the protection of Canada's publicly owned wilderness. Our goal is to create a pan-Canadian movement for wilderness protection that will result in at least 50% of Canada being maintained in a permanently wild state.

The concept of The Big Wild is a vision for Canada's wilderness that CPAWS adopted as its national conservation plan in 2005. As such, it encompasses four main geographic regions - Canada's Boreal Forest, the Yellowstone-to-Yukon corridor, the Eastern Woodlands (Appalachia), and our marine waters and great fresh water lakes.

The term The Big Wild refers to that part of Canada that is still mainly intact and roadless, where wild rivers flow free, big lakes and oceans lap against wild shores, large mammals roam and breed, and people can experience a deep relationship with wild nature in areas big enough to leave industrial civilization behind.

The Big Wild is intended to support major wilderness protection advancements within the next decade, before it is too late. The Big Wild is not in itself a conservation campaign; rather, it is a communications initiative to support conservation campaigns and initiatives across Canada for our 'big wild' places. (cont'd p.8)

Tidal Energy Development in the Bay of Fundy

By Laura Smith, CPAWS Volunteer

As part of their pledge to generate twenty per cent of the province's power from renewable sources by the year 2013, the government of Nova Scotia has been exploring the possibility of generating large-scale tidal power in the Bay of Fundy, where the world's highest tides show great promise as a source of relatively clean energy. Now, the government has commissioned a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to consider the logistics and impacts of such development. The assessment, which will be carried out by the Offshore Energy Environmental Research Association (OEER) and conducted in collaboration with the province of New Brunswick, will predict the likely environmental, industrial, and social effects of a Fundy tidal power project.

Nova Scotia Power is already the first power utility in North America to provide electricity from tidal power with the Annapolis Royal generating station (one of only three tidal power stations in the world), which serves about four thousand homes. This new proposal involves power generation at a much larger scale, and will not require damming and the environmental problems that can result from this. Seven sites in Nova Scotia are currently being evaluated for their potential to host

underwater turbines or other technologies to harness the tides' incredible energy.

In this age of continued fossil fuel dependence amidst accelerating climate change, the need for abundant supplies of cleaner, renewable energy has never been greater. Tidal power comes with a high energy yield, lower long-term costs, and far fewer greenhouse gas emissions than non-renewable sources. It is, however, physically intrusive to the marine environment and more research is needed to predict its impacts on the Bay of Fundy undersea environment, especially at large scales.

The final SEA report will advise the government whether such a project is warranted, how development should be regulated, and if it is ultimately possible. As with any development of this scale and potential environmental impact, CPAWS-NS plans to stay informed on the progress of the SEA and of Fundy tidal power projects in general, and will be working to ensure that the Bay of Fundy's ecological integrity is protected. The SEA report is due to be released in spring 2008.

Are you a member? Since 1963, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society has helped to conserve over 400,000 square kilometres of Canada's most treasured wild places in parks and other protected areas.

By making an annual donation to CPAWS you'll receive our biannual newsletter, chapter updates and invitations to special events. But most importantly, you'll help to protect and preserve Canada's wilderness and wildlife.

With your help, we'll save another 400,000km² of Canada's wilderness in the next decade, before it's too late.

I want to protect Canada's wilderness. Here is my CPAWS membership contribution of:

\$35 \$50 \$100 \$200 Other _____

We provide tax receipts for all donations of \$10 or more

Please find my: cheque enclosed; or charge my: Visa Mastercard American Express

Card # _____ Expiry Date _____

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Please send me information on making a planned gift (e.g., a bequest in my will or a gift of life insurance)

I would like to receive news and campaign updates by email

 Cut along line and mail to: CPAWS-NS, 1099 Marginal Road, Suite 201, Halifax NS, B3H 4P7

CPAWS-NS is Switching to an E-Newsletter!

Please make sure we have YOUR e-mail address!

Switching to an electronically delivered newsletter will allow CPAWS-NS to continue to provide members with news on all the great work we're doing in Nova Scotia, while using less paper. This saves trees, and will also cut down on our costs so that more funds can go straight to supporting our conservation work.

Please email us at cpawsns@cpawsns.org with the subject heading 'e-newsletter' to provide us with your email address so you can receive our next newsletter electronically.

If you do not have an email address, or prefer not to receive our newsletter electronically, please complete the form below and mail to CPAWS-NS (1099 Marginal Road, Suite 201, Halifax NS, B3H 4P7) and we will ensure that you continue to receive our twice-yearly newsletter by mail.

Thank you for your support!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Please continue to mail me a printed copy of the CPAWS-NS newsletter

The Big Wild... (cont'd from p.6)

Following a pilot testing period during the summer of 2007 with MEC staff and CPAWS members, the public launch of The Big Wild will take place this spring. Our intent is that through public

engagement, decision-makers will move to protect more of Canada's 'big wild', moving closer to our vision of maintaining at least 50% of Canada's public land and water as permanently wild.

What will be happening in 2008? Watch for information and displays in MEC's catalogue

and stores, and for the Big Wild website, which will act as a community hub to connect Big Wild supporters. Also, The Big Wild Challenge will be launched to enlist Canadian outdoor enthusiasts to dedicate their outdoor adventures to the cause of wilderness protection.

What does this mean for Nova Scotia? A Big Wild spring launch event is being organized in Halifax, by CPAWS-Nova Scotia and the MEC Halifax staff members. The event promises to be a 'big' and 'wild' event, including presentations, entertainment, and mingling. Stay tuned!



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CPAWS-NS would like to thank the following funding organizations for their generous contributions to our success last year: Sage Environmental Program, EJLB Foundation, George Cedric Metcalf Charitable Foundation, Ivey Foundation, The McLean Foundation, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency, Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Nature Canada, Action for Neighbourhood Change. We would also like to thank our many individual supporters for their generous contributions.

We've Moved!

The CPAWS-NS office is now located at: 1099 Marginal Road, Suite 201, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3H 4P7.

Please update your address books!