

Wilderness in our Backyard





**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**

Since this newsletter was last published there has been a stunning amount of designations, announcements, investments, and general progress made in the name of conservation in Nova Scotia. The pages of this newsletter detail many of them, but to be honest – we had trouble finding all the room we needed!

Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes – a readily accessible wilderness on the doorstep of Atlantic Canada's largest urban centre; Shelburne River – steeped in heritage and lore; and Ship Harbour Long Lake – one of the province's largest remaining tracts of wilderness. All are now permanently protected as wilderness areas. CPAWS-NS also moved Nova Scotia closer to major advances in marine protection than it has ever been. In October, the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced three candidate sites for the establishment of an offshore marine protected area on the Eastern Scotian Shelf. You have a chance to speak up on this process by participating in public consultations happening right now. Please make your voice heard (See pg. 9 for details).

CPAWS-NS would like to take this opportunity to say thanks to staff members who've left the chapter recently and to welcome those who have joined our team. We say goodbye to Jenn Spencer, Marine Conservation Planner, who has carried out important work in communities all around Nova Scotia. We are pleased to congratulate Ashley Sprague, Marine Conservation Coordinator on her upcoming maternity leave! We wish her and her family all the best and look forward to her return to CPAWS-NS. Jon Feldgajer and Lindsay Notzl have also moved on recently, to Labrador. Jon grew the chapter's education programs significantly while at CPAWS-NS and Lindsay was instrumental in building the case for protection at Chignecto. We wish them both much warmth in the cold snowy north! Filling the Education Coordinator role will be Christina MacLeod. Christina comes to CPAWS-NS with a Master's degree in Environmental Legal Studies and experience with politics and education. She's a perfect fit and we welcome her! We are also very grateful to Chris Miller for his continued work on conservation in Nova Scotia, helping to push the recent conservation announcements forward to successful conclusions. He is employed by CPAWS at the National level, but always finds time to help out the Chapter, including doing the editing and layout of this newsletter.

As always, CPAWS-NS has been delighted with the efforts of our many volunteers, especially the amazing team of volunteer divers who helped Ashley collect data on marine organisms and their efforts are specially appreciated. We thank Myles Thompson, Aurelie Godin, Colleen Turlo, Lisa Watzinger, Kristina Benoit, Romney McPhie, Shannon Arnold, Rob Johnson, Aimee Gromack, and Aimee Pelletier.

Finally, if you are looking for a way to continue your valued support of CPAWS-NS this holiday season, visit our website to donate – and consider signing on as a monthly donor.

Yours in Conservation,

CPAWS-NS Executive and Board of Directors

 *About the cover*

Catherine Hutt enjoys a paddle in the newly established Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area (photo: Dave Young).



Scott Leslie

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News from the frontlines



Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Finally protected

By: Chris Miller

Irwin Barrett

It's finally protected!!! After many years of grassroots campaigning by the community, the provincial government announced on Earth Day that it has finally designated the public lands of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes as a legally-protected wilderness area.

This designation means that this spectacular wilderness, only 10 kilometres from downtown Halifax, will forever be protected as a natural area. It prevents any future clearcutting, mining, or road-building within the boundaries of the park, and puts a stop to unchecked suburban sprawl in that part of the city.

And, at nearly twenty times the size of Point Pleasant Park, the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area is also one of the largest near-urban wilderness parks established in Canada. It can even be reached today by public transit.

The Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area is a truly remarkable spot. It contains an abundance of forest, lakes, rivers, and wetlands, and is home to a wide variety of animals, including black bear, bobcat, river otter, loons, ospreys, and beavers. It contains habitat for Nova Scotia's endangered mainland moose, and other species-at-risk, such as the common nighthawk and rare arctic-alpine flora.

The protected wilderness area is also a great spot for people to enjoy nature. It contains the only “canoe loop” near the city; a system of nine interconnected lakes arranged in a loop, making for a spectacular backcountry wilderness canoeing experience only minutes from downtown. It's also a great spot for hiking, swimming, skating, and cross-country skiing, and is a popular place for bird watching, wilderness photography, nature appreciation, and geocaching.

Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area also opens-up tremendous opportunities for outdoor education and research, for public schools and nearby universities. This past summer, a team of scientists descended on the wilderness area to document its biodiversity, finding nearly 1000 different species of plants and animals in a 24 hour period. The one-day BioBlitz, sponsored by Saint Mary’s University, also brought hundreds of volunteers and members of the public to the wilderness to learn about ecology and nature conservation.

Having such an amazing wilderness located so close to the city is a tremendous asset for the Halifax Regional Municipality. It will add to the quality-of-life of its citizens by encouraging a healthy, and active lifestyle, and providing clean water, clean air, and vast stretches of forest to residents and visitors alike. Having places like Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area protected will go a long way in making Halifax a more livable city that will attract and retain new residents.

And, as the city continues to grow, places like Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area will only become more important with time. Most cities in North America lost their wilderness backyards long ago, and most would love dearly to have them back.

Threats

Amazingly, however, the protection of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area almost didn’t happen. These public lands, until very recently, were the most threatened piece of wilderness remaining in Nova Scotia, imperiled by (1) suburban sprawl, (2) public land disposal, (3) a new four-lane highway, and (4) proposed rock quarries.

Over the past decade, suburban sprawl has encroached upon Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes and surrounded it with low density development. The area is now almost an island of nature in a sea of exurban development, with its edges rapidly being chipped away by new subdivisions. Without the wilderness area designation, the unchecked

suburban sprawl that has claimed so much land around the edges of the city would surely have claimed the spectacular wilderness of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes as well.

Also threatening Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes was the government practice of trading away public lands to private interests, something which takes place behind-closed-doors and outside of the view of the public. In the past, large tracts of public land from the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes wilderness were traded away, including a swap in the early 1990’s which removed one of the last pieces of public land from the shorelines of popular Quarry Lake. Fortunately, the worst of the land trade proposals have been stopped, some just-in-a-knick-of-time, due to the vigilance of the local community and the dedication of local politicians working for their community’s best interest. By some accounts, the most egregious of these proposed Crown swaps were stopped only a few days before the land transactions were to occur.

Also threatening the wilderness was a proposal to construct a new 4-lane highway across the public lands of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes, potentially opening up the entire wilderness to sprawling development. That proposal has been under environmental review for over a decade, since 1998, and has yet to achieve the required environmental permits. Still, the provincial government continues to pursue the Highway 113 proposal.

From time to time, proposals have also surfaced to establish a rock quarry on top of Blue Mountain Hill, the highest point of land on the Chebucto Peninsula offering incredible vistas of the wilderness and the city beyond. From here, one can see the buildings of downtown Halifax at the same time one can watch airplanes land at the airport at the same time one can see the sun set behind the hills on the Aspotogan Peninsula. The



*Suburban sprawl BEFORE and AFTER near Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes
Air photos (NS government)*

most recent proposal to establish a rock quarry on Blue Mountain Hill was for the Highway 113 project, to provide aggregate for the highway construction. That quarry proposal has now been dropped and the new wilderness area designation means that Blue Mountain Hill will forever be protected from open-pit quarries.

The campaign

The Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area was created because thousands of people came together and demanded that these public lands be protected from development, for nature conservation and for the benefit and enjoyment of the public. People from all corners of the city and from every walk-of-life stood up to be counted.

School kids, church groups, hikers, academics, canoers, community members, environmentalists, photographers, businesses, and countless others all rallied for the cause to protect Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes. This also included a coalition of non-governmental organizations, led by CPAWS, with Halifax Field Naturalists, Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia, Halifax North West Trails Association, and Ecology Action Centre. Local politicians from all-stripes and at all levels of government also worked to protect Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes, as did many government employees working quietly behind the scenes to ensure that the designation could happen.

The story of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area is a story about cooperation, of shared values, and determination. For too long, wilderness on the edge of the city has fallen wayside to sprawling development. But, when it came to Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes, the public said “not this one; no way”. And, because of that focus, that line-in-the-sand, and most importantly, the energy and persistence of the grassroots campaign, today we celebrate the creation of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area. This is a wilderness legacy that we share with future generations of Haligonians who will come to know its vast forests, remote lakes, and quiet coves as we have.

Time will tell

All is NOT done, however. Now that the public lands of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes are officially designated as a protected wilderness area, the community must take ownership of this natural park. We must look after this wilderness, take care of its water and land, and ensure that the ecological integrity of the wilderness area is maintained. A strong management plan must also be put in place by the provincial government, to protect the ecosystems of the wilderness area.



Irwin Barrett

No doubt, along the way, there will surely be tests for the new wilderness area and for the community's resolve to look after these lands. Inevitably, there will be calls to favour development over conservation; there will be proposals to develop lands adjacent to the wilderness area or elsewhere within the watershed; and there will be people who will want to use the area in a way that will threaten its ecological integrity. These tests will surely come.

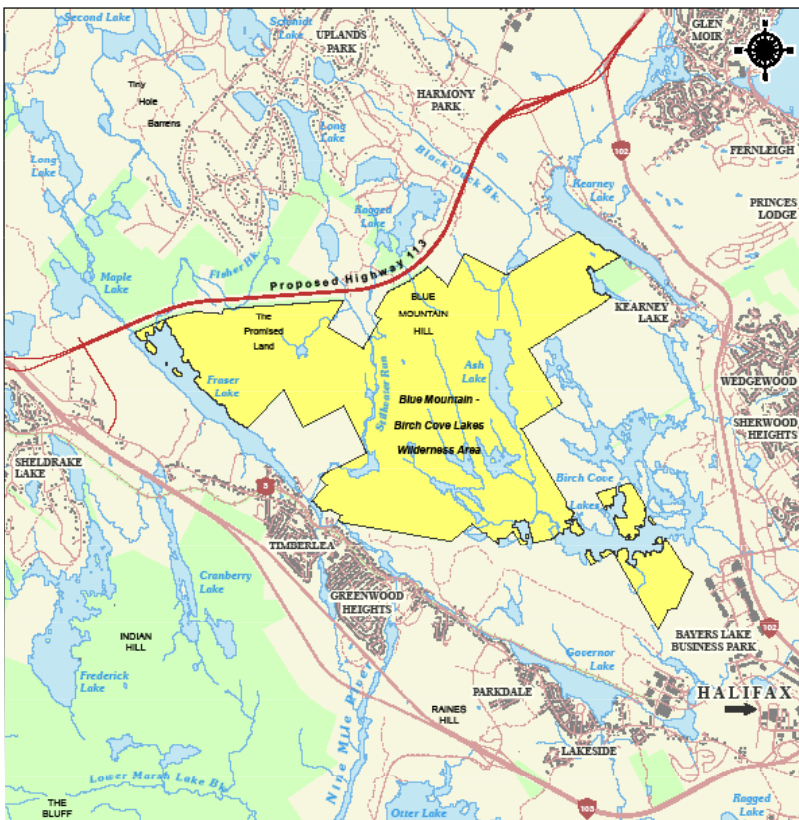
In the face of these pending threats, the community will need to stay vigilant and organized, and become good stewards of the wilderness area. Only time will tell if we are successful in looking after these lands. Unfortunately, we may already be facing one of the first big tests for Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes.

City yet to act

More than three years ago, in the spring of 2006, and after much public debate, the Halifax Regional Municipality finally approved a comprehensive regional plan to guide development in the city over the next 25 years. That plan, which addresses issues of development, economics, settlement patterns, transportation infrastructure, servicing, and environmental protection, among others, identified Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes as a site for a new regional park. The regional plan even included a map showing the ideal configuration for the park boundary, which includes public lands as well as private lands that the City will work to acquire over time.

In the three years since that plan was approved by City Hall, however, the Municipality has failed to acquire any lands for the new regional park. Private lands located adjacent to the wilderness area within the “ideal configuration” for the regional park remain available for development. This includes large stretches of land on Susies Lake, as well as the entire lakeshore of Quarry Lake and Fox Lake. These lakes contain important recreation opportunities, and constitute about half of the wilderness “canoe loop” in the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes area.

The city needs to get its act together, and start working with adjacent landowners to acquire these lands now, at fair market value. The city always seems to have money to widen roads leading into the city. Now it's time for the city to come up with sufficient funding to complete the conservation of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes. It's not enough for the City to simply say it's going to protect these lands; the Municipality must actually follow through on its promise. Pretty maps in a report that nobody looks at is not enough. The City can do better and, like the provincial government has done, needs to get serious about protecting Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes, before it's too late.



Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area (map: Nova Scotia Environment)

Thank you

A big thank you to everyone who helped protect Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes. All of the letters, emails, and phone calls made a difference. CPAWS is appreciative of the support.

Marine Protected Areas proposed

Three areas of interest being considered for Eastern Scotian Shelf



By: Ashley Sprague

The Government of Canada has announced three areas of interest (AOIs) as candidates for the establishment of Nova Scotia's next marine protected area (MPA). These candidates are all offshore banks on the Eastern Scotian Shelf: (1) Middle Bank, (2) St. Anns Bank, and (3) Misaine Bank and the Eastern Shoal. These offshore banks are highly productive areas of relatively shallow water where invertebrates and groundfish are found in high abundance. All three sites contain important habitat for threatened marine species including Atlantic Cod and Atlantic Wolffish. St Anns Bank and Misaine Bank and Eastern Shoal are also home to sensitive cold water corals.

This is a welcome step, but sadly, Canada is lagging far behind in its commitment to protect our oceans. At the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development and at the 2004 Convention of Biological Diversity, Canada committed to creating a national network of Marine Protected Areas by 2012, but we've done little to establish new marine protected areas. In the Scotian Shelf/Bay of Fundy region, the existing protected areas add up to only one half of one per cent of the marine environment and protect only a fraction of the region's habitat types and natural diversity.

CPAWS, along with WWF-Canada and the Ecology Action Centre, have been advocating for a well-planned network of MPAs that protects ecologically significant areas. Protected area networks are recognized by scientists as the most important tool for helping ecosystems cope with the pressures of overfishing, industrialization and climate change on our oceans. Nova Scotia has made great progress in protecting significant areas on land, and now steps urgently need to be taken to protect important species and habitats in the ocean.

MPAs are areas of the ocean designed to protect biodiversity and are legally protected from harmful activities to allow for recovery of species and habitats. The benefits of marine protected areas include: more plants and animals per cubic metre of ocean, a wider range of species, and larger fish that produce more young – which could lead to a rebound of overfished stocks and mean long-term profits for fishing communities.

Make your voice heard

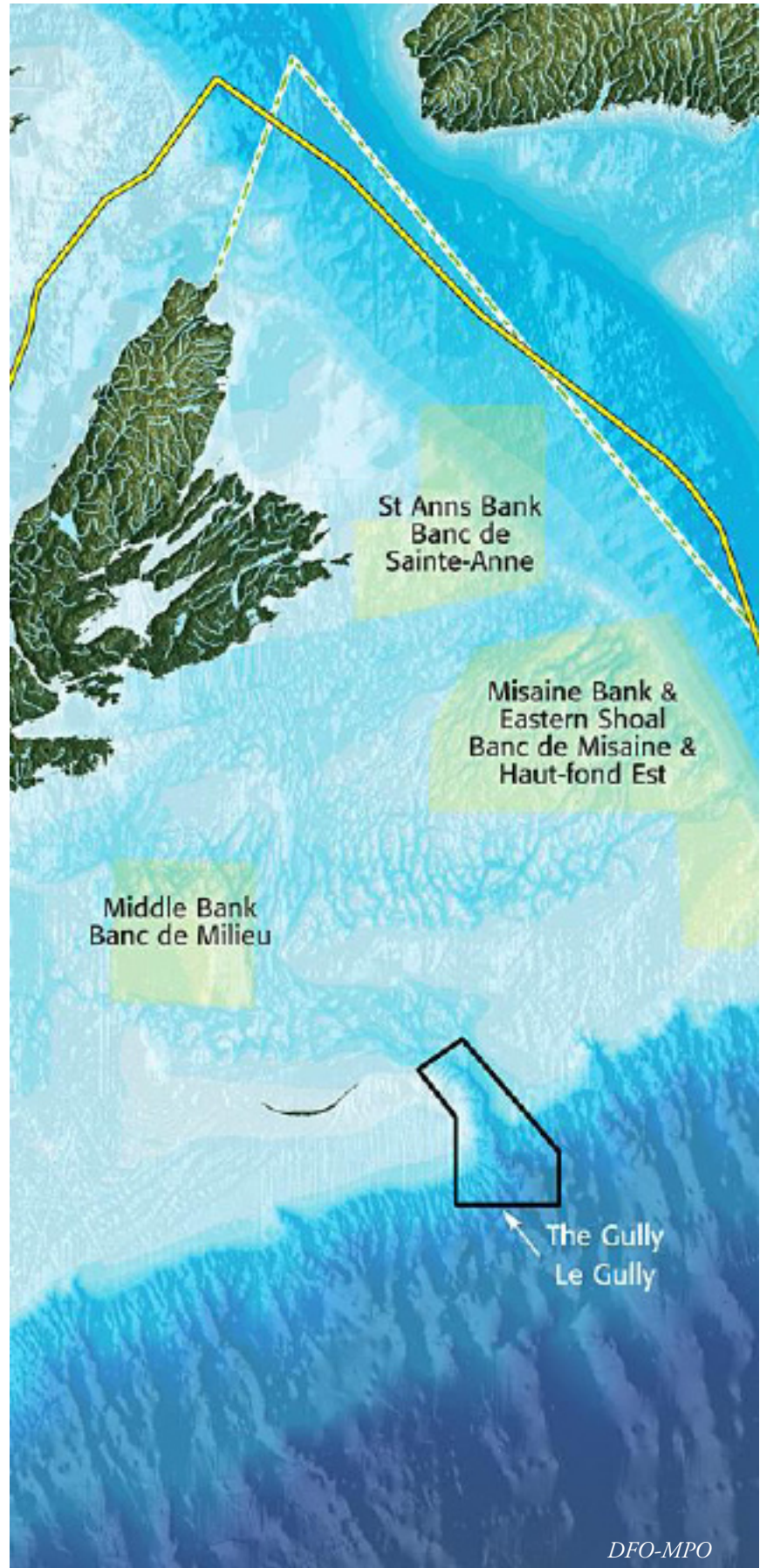
A public consultation period is now underway to select which Area of Interest will move forward to becoming Nova Scotia's next MPA. The consultation is open to public comments until mid-February 2010.

This is your chance to have a say in the future of Nova Scotia's oceans and we strongly encourage the public to get involved.

To voice your support for increasing ocean protection in our region, download the AOI Consultation Booklet and Feedback form from our website: www.cpawsns.org

or send an email or write a letter directly to Gail Shea, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans:

The Honourable Gail Shea
House of Commons
Minister of Fisheries and Oceans
Parliament Buildings, Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1A 0A6
Shea.G@parl.gc.ca





Irreplaceable Chignecto

By: Chris Miller

Irwin Barrett

It hasn't been all that long since the provincial government proposed removing the game sanctuary status from the Chignecto Game Sanctuary. Chignecto, like most of the other game sanctuaries in the province, found themselves on the chopping block back in 2004, slated to lose their protected status and become just like any other piece of Crown land.

This top-down decision from government generated a huge backlash from Nova Scotians from one end of the province to the other. The government and elected officials soon found themselves swamped with angry letters and phone calls demanding that these areas remain protected. The public pressure worked. The government soon back-tracked and declared that none of the game sanctuaries or wildlife management areas would be de-listed.

The story doesn't stop there. When people started looking at what a "game sanctuary" designation actually means, they discovered that this type of protected area really doesn't provide all that much protection for habitats and ecosystems after all.

These areas, so prominently displayed on provincial road-maps in green, prohibit some forms of hunting but allow for all sorts of industrial activities. This includes clearcutting, open-pit mining, road-building, development, seismic testing, and off-highway vehicle use, among other activities.

Many demanded that the habitat inside the game sanctuaries be better protected and suggested that these areas should become full-fledged wilderness areas and nature reserves. These stronger protected area designations, on top of the existing game sanctuaries, would provide the sort of habitat protection that many Nova Scotians were demanding. No longer would the game sanctuaries just be pretty green areas on roadmaps; they'd become important additions to Nova Scotia's system of protected areas.

At that time, CPAWS joined with groups from across the province to demand stronger habitat protection for our game sanctuaries and wildlife management areas. We worked with Friends of Nature for a nature reserve designation for the Blandford Wildlife Management Area in Lunenburg County; with the group Bay of Islands for stronger habitat protection for public lands within the Liscomb Game Sanctuary along the Eastern Shore; and with Cumberland Wilderness for a wilderness area designation for public lands within the Chignecto Game Sanctuary.

Our message to government was clear; Nova Scotians are asking for stronger protection for our game sanctuaries and wildlife management areas, not less. Since that time, the provincial government has acted, declaring a nature reserve for the Blandford site, back in spring 2007. But, it's failed to strengthen the protection-level for any of the public lands within the Liscomb or Chignecto Game Sanctuaries.

Fortunately, that's about to change. After years of steady pressure on the government, the Province has just announced that it intends to establish a "large" wilderness area on public lands in and near the Chignecto Game Sanctuary. This is a big step in the right direction. For too long, the government has avoided this issue, and has skirted a wilderness area designation for Chignecto.

The public lands within, and near, the Chignecto Game Sanctuary are no ordinary place. Here occurs the largest stretch of unprotected forest remaining in Nova Scotia, almost 50,000 hectares of forests and lakes and wetlands and meadows. This includes some of the most significant stands of old-growth Acadian forest in the province, with vast stretches of mature sugar maple forest, red maple floodplains, and important stands of red spruce.

Chignecto also provides important habitat for numerous species-at-risk, including the wood turtle, Inner Bay of Fundy Atlantic salmon, and one of the largest remaining populations of endangered mainland moose. It also boasts a number of important rivers that wind their way through the sanctuary; Kelly River, River Hebert, Sand River, and the Shulie.

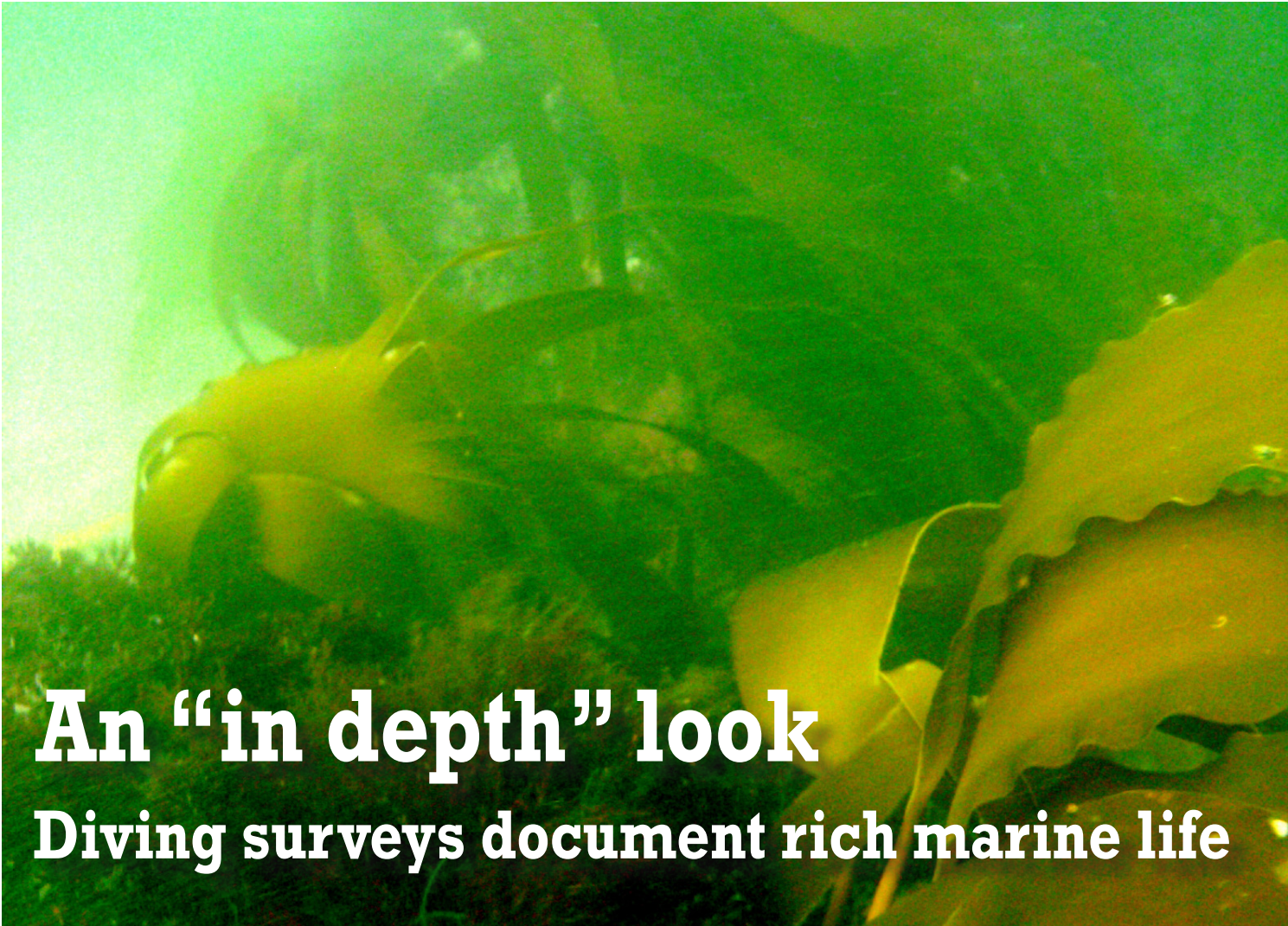
The public lands near the Chignecto Game Sanctuary also reach all the way to the rugged shores of the Bay of Fundy Coast, where there are extensive salt marshes, beach systems, and long stretches of undeveloped shoreline. Here, large congregations of shorebirds come together in the spring and fall to feed on the rich mudflats of the Bay of Fundy on their migrations along the Atlantic flyway.

Chignecto is also important for its landscape connectivity, providing an important anchor point for a system of protected areas that's needed along the Isthmus of Chignecto, linking Nova Scotia with New Brunswick and the rest of North America. Study after study has identified this part of Nova Scotia as one of the most critical areas in Eastern North America for nature conservation.

There's certainly no shortage of reasons why Chignecto must be protected, which is why CPAWS is welcoming the government's announcement that it will establish a large wilderness area on public lands within and near the game sanctuary. Public and stakeholder consultations will begin shortly, and a proposed boundary for the candidate wilderness area will be released after that.

CPAWS will be working hard to ensure that the substantial majority of the public lands of Chignecto are designated as protected through this process. Stay tuned!





An “in depth” look

Diving surveys document rich marine life

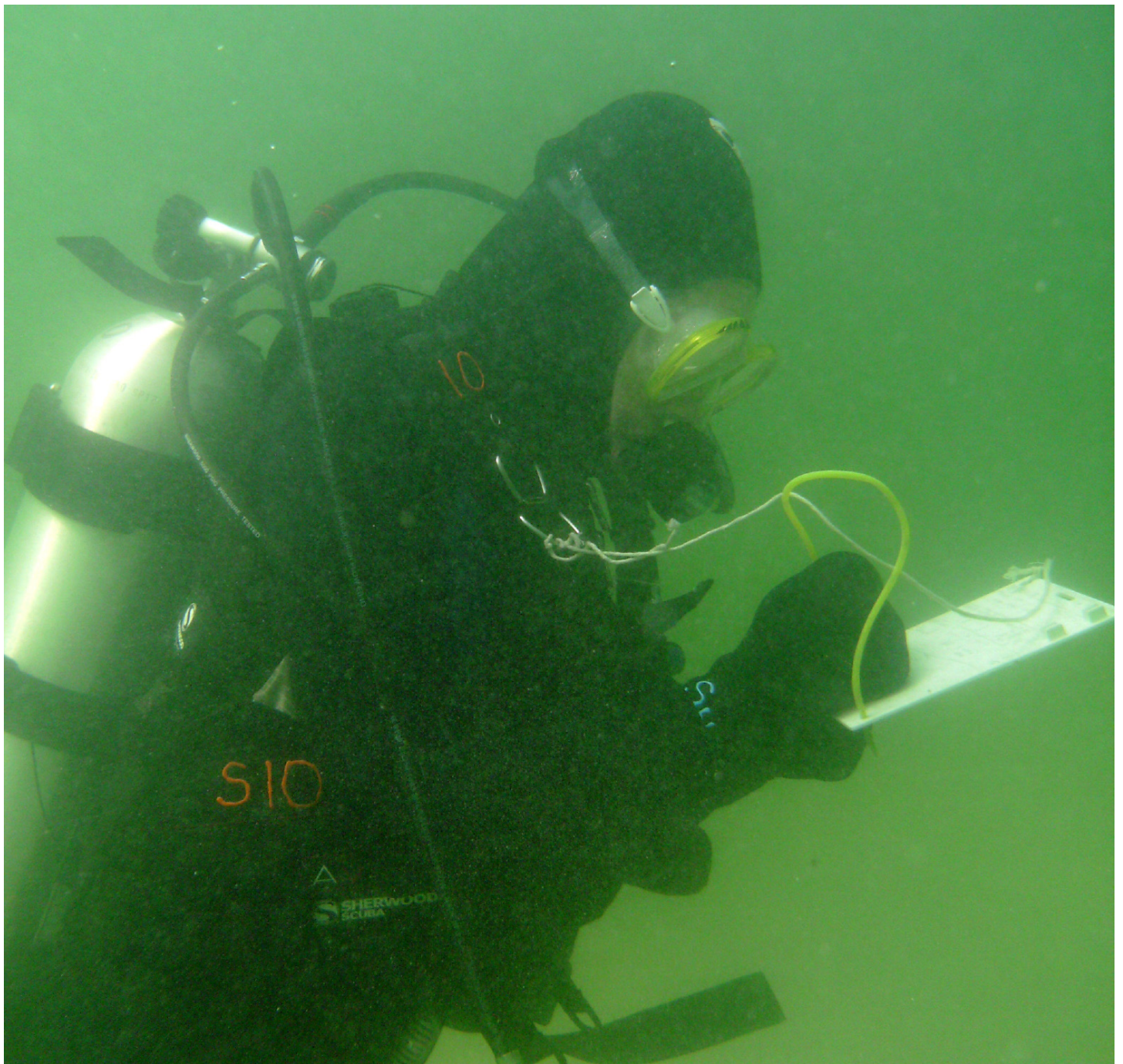
By: Ashley Sprague

Marine staff from CPAWS-NS, along with many fabulous volunteers, conducted a comprehensive underwater study this summer in two ecologically significant sites in the province – Port Joli Harbor and Eastern Shore Islands. Valuable information on marine species diversity and abundance was collected from a total of 38 SCUBA diving transects.

Surveys in Port Joli Harbour revealed a high percentage of eelgrass cover, a great indication of site health. Eelgrass is a very productive habitat that provides food, breeding, and nursery areas for fish and invertebrates. Our lobster-fishing boat captain was happy to hear that we also recorded a high abundance of lobsters along the sandy bottom of the harbour! Other common invertebrates encountered included periwinkles, blue mussels, rock crab, green crab, hermit crab, sand shrimp, whelks, barnacles, sponges, tunicates, and limpets.

The relatively unexplored rocky bottom habitat of the Eastern Shore Islands had a high percentage of kelp cover, another important indicator of biological productivity. A number of fish and invertebrate species were observed among the kelp beds including scallops, blue mussels, horse mussels, sea stars, limpets, chiton, whelks, and crab. We saw less lobster in this site, but many more fish species including mackerel, pollock, flounder, sculpin, and sea raven.

Information collected from this study will help us better understand the ecology of these two important sites, as well as fill knowledge gaps of species and habitat distribution. A complete analysis of our scientific findings will be published in an upcoming CPAWS-NS report. Thanks to our many wonderful volunteers and boat captains, Mike Swim, Robert Swim, and Leonard Connors who helped make this research project a success.



Major cash for land conservation

Province commits \$80 million in new funding for buying private lands from forestry companies

By: Chris Miller

The feature article in the last issue of WildEast (re: “For Sale: Wilderness”) examined the problem of forest companies in Nova Scotia selling vast tracks of private land to development interests and land holding companies. In Nova Scotia, nearly 15% of the provincial landmass is owned by four forestry companies, and much of that land is currently for sale.

We laid out an argument for the provincial government to allocate an initial \$100 million investment in land acquisition, so that some of this land could be brought back into public ownership, principally for conservation but also for public access and sustainable resource use. That’s a lot of money, but it’s still only a fraction of the annual budget for roads and highways in Nova Scotia and it still amounts to only about 0.3% of the province’s annual Gross Domestic Product.

Well, a lot can happen in a short time. Since the last issue of WildEast, the provincial government has come up with \$80 million dollars in its current budget to acquire private lands from the forest companies. Of that, at least \$66 million is earmarked specifically for acquiring lands for protected areas, so that the province can achieve its land conservation goals set out in the Environmental Goals and Sustainable Prosperity Act. That legislation requires the province to protect 12% of Nova Scotia’s landmass by the year 2015. An additional \$1 million has also been allocated specifically for land purchases to expand existing protected wilderness areas, through purchasing private inholdings or ecologically-significant adjacent properties.

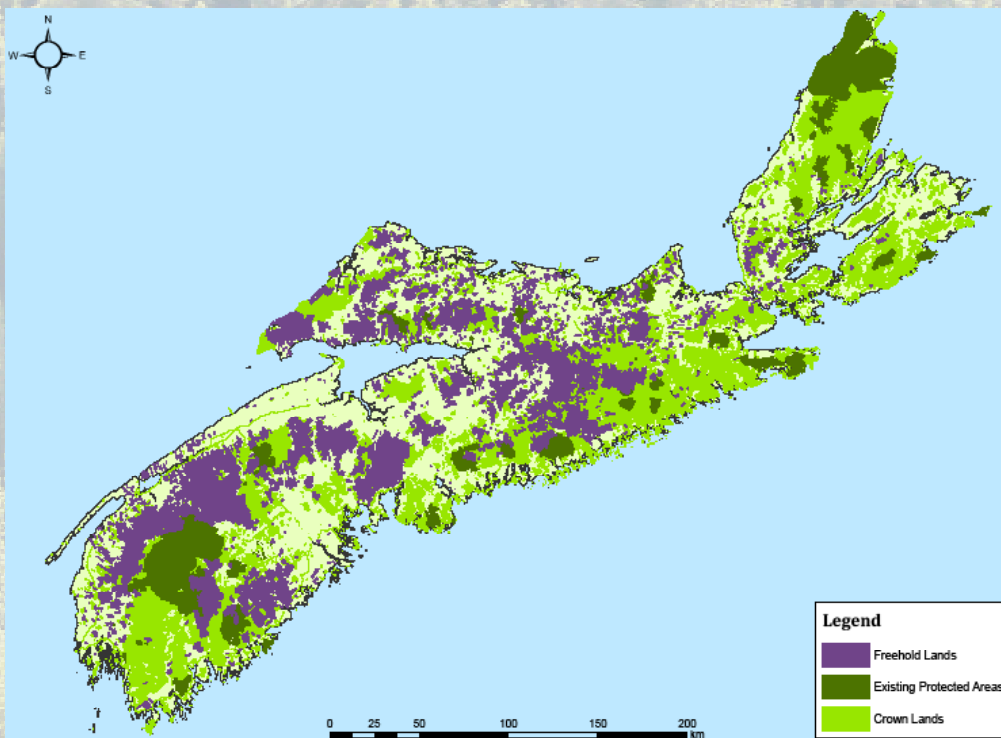
For the past several years, CPAWS has been working with the provincial government, several large forest companies, and the Ecology Action Centre to prioritize lands for conservation. This includes private lands owned by the forest companies. With the \$80 million in funding that’s been announced, CPAWS is confident that thousands of hectares of woodlands will be acquired for conservation from the forest companies.

In 2007, the province purchased about 10,000 hectares of land from the forest company Abitibi-Bowater, in southwestern Nova Scotia, and created dozens of new nature reserves and provincial parks, and expanded several existing protected wilderness areas. That land purchase cost the province about \$27 million. So, with the \$80 million in new funding for land purchases that's been announced, the province can expect to acquire about 30,000 hectares of land, perhaps more.

And, we hope the provincial government moves to protect several important areas located on forest company lands. These include large tracts of land for sale from J.D. Irving Ltd. in southwestern Nova Scotia, including irreplaceable lands located along the Tusket River. It should also include private lands owned by forest companies on the St. Mary's River, the karst landscapes of Hants County, lands along the Eastern Shore, and some important properties located near the Chignecto Game Sanctuary, among others.

We also hope it will include lands owned by Wagner Forestry on Aylesford Lake in Kings County. As we mentioned in our last issue of WildEast, these lands are currently for sale on the internet as prime cottage country, but really they should be acquired to provide a wilderness backyard for Brigadoon; a proposed state-of-the-art wilderness camp facility on Aylesford Lake for sick and terminally-ill children from across Atlantic Canada (www.brigadoonvillage.org).

The provincial government is to be applauded for its foresight in setting aside this substantial amount of funding for land purchases and for seizing this once-in-a-generation opportunity. With only about 30% of Nova Scotia in public ownership and much of our large tracts of wilderness for sale, this funding will go a long way in expanding the protected areas system in Nova Scotia and ensuring that Nova Scotians will always have access to our wilderness stomping grounds.



*Map: CPAWS-NS
Large tracts of wilderness in Nova Scotia are owned by forest companies*

“Save some room on the playground for the fish”

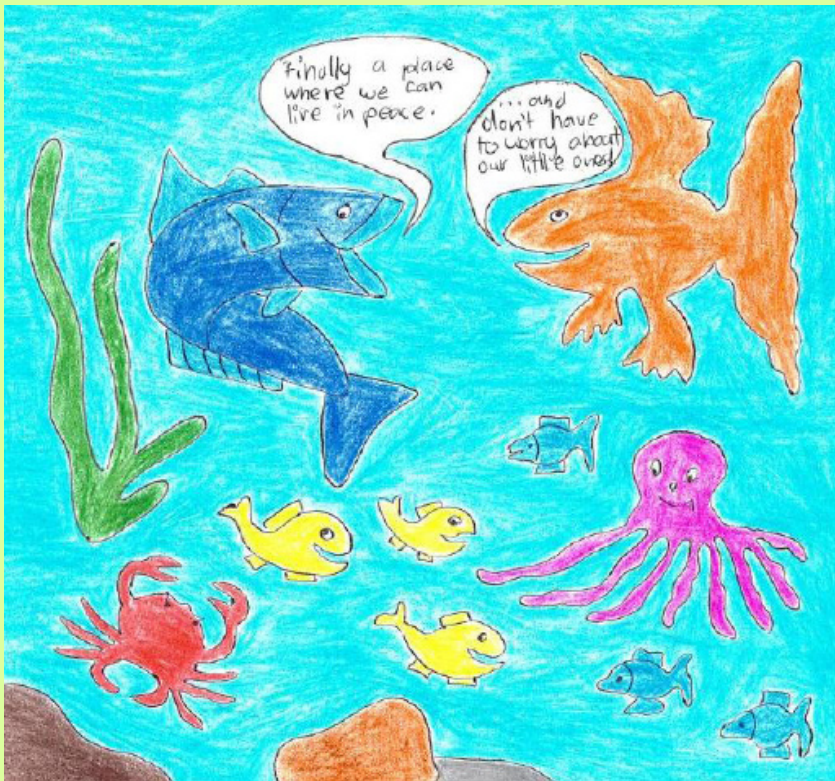
Youth speak up for the oceans

This summer and fall, CPAWS-NS asked youth to participate in our ‘Whose Ocean Playground’ contest and once again youth from across Nova Scotia rose to the challenge. Youth were asked to share their creative visions of how marine protected areas can create safe places for marine life to live, breed, and raise their young.

We heard that youth want the government to ‘save some room on the playground for the fish’ by creating Marine Protected Areas, to allow species to recover so there will always be marine life in our oceans for generations to come. A big thanks to everyone who took the time to speak up for the oceans.



By: Sophie Shaar and John Hay



By: John Zimmermann



By: Drew McCarthy

MANY PEOPLE CARE FOR NATURE, ONE JUST BEING ME



FOREST, JUNGLE ANIMALS BUT ALSO UNDER SEA

By: Marielena Zimmermann



By: Bethany Nickerson



By: Amanda Newell



By: Noah Nickerson



Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area

By: Chris Miller

Nova Scotia Environment

The provincial government has followed through on its promise to protect a vast stretch of wilderness along the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia, at Ship Harbour Long Lake. After several years of public and stakeholder consultations, the designation of the new wilderness area was completed in September.

This is the largest protected area that's been established in Nova Scotia for more than a decade and it includes land that has long been targeted by the forest industry for harvesting. Protected from logging, mining, and development are 14,700 hectares of public land containing large intact forests, dozens of lakes, and hundreds of wetlands. The area is also a refuge for several species-at-risk, including the endangered mainland moose and boreal felt lichen.

The creation of the Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area was made possible by a ground-breaking agreement reached in 2007 between several environmental organizations and the forest company holding the lease to cut trees on the Crown lands at Ship Harbour Long Lake. That agreement, signed by Neenah Paper, Eastern Shore Forest Watch, Ecology Action Centre, CPAWS, and the Nova Scotia Departments of Environment and Natural Resources, enabled the formal designation process for Ship Harbour Long Lake to begin.

Through the public consultation phase, the Ship Harbour Long Lake Wilderness Area was expanded to include a number of new areas that were found to contain ecologically-significant values. A proposal by the provincial government to harvest trees from some of these additions prior to designation, however, was dropped and these parcels are now protected inside the boundaries of the wilderness areas with their forests fully intact. In total, about 550 hectares of land were added through the designation process.

Unfortunately, several areas originally proposed for protection as part of the candidate wilderness area were removed from consideration to accommodate the mining industry and other commercial interests. This included losing areas near Gold Lake, Dreadnought Lake, Second Rocky Lake, and Little Hartman Lake.

CPAWS has worked with a coalition of groups over the past decade to ensure that the wilderness area designation was made possible. We would like to thank everyone who was involved in ensuring Ship Harbour Long Lake was protected, especially the many friendly faces and hard-working folks along the Eastern Shore.

Conservation notes

Chebucto Peninsula

The provincial government has announced another candidate wilderness area, selecting a large tract of public land on the Chebucto Peninsula near Halifax for protection. The Five Bridge Lakes Candidate Wilderness Area is roughly 8,000 hectares in size, containing a wealth of interconnected lakes and waterways, a vast rolling landscape, a population of endangered mainland moose, and a popular set of wilderness hiking trails called “The Bluff Trail”. Public consultations on the new proposed wilderness area will begin shortly.

The Halifax Regional Municipality owns a large piece of land adjacent to the candidate wilderness area, near Big Five Bridge Lake and along Nine Mile River near the Western Common, lands the city has already declared it would like protected as a wilderness park. Other Municipalities in Nova Scotia have designated some of their land holdings as wilderness area, including the Town of Amherst most recently and the Town of Antigonish. No word yet if the Halifax Regional Municipality will do the same.

Nature Calls

Together with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax, CPAWS-NS helped bring over 100 urban youth into the wilderness to experience nature. A total of nine hikes were carried out this year, visiting a number of sites, including Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area, Kejimikujik National Park, Duncan’s Cove Nature Reserve, Waverley - Salmon River Long Lake Wilderness Area, and Five Bridge Lakes Candidate Wilderness Area. We had a lot of fun with the kids of Big Brothers Big Sisters learning about the outdoors, hiking, canoeing, birdwatching, and geocaching.

Shelburne River Wilderness Area

The provincial government has completed the wilderness area designation for 2,267 hectares of land along the Shelburne River, in southwestern Nova Scotia. Added to the protected area through the public consultation phase was an important stand of old-growth forest at Pollard’s Falls, recommended for protection way back in the 1970’s through the International Biological Programme (IBP) and containing some of the largest remaining hemlock trees in the Maritime Provinces. The Shelburne River is also designated as a Canadian Heritage River.

Wilderness Act amendments

One step forward; one step back. The provincial government has opened-up the Wilderness Areas Protection Act to a handful of amendments. On the plus side, one of the amendments removes Ministerial discretion to issue off-highway vehicle permits for recreational use inside the boundaries of a wilderness area. This amendment removes what is commonly referred to as the “ATV loophole” in the Wilderness Areas Protection Act. On the down side, another amendment opens Hay Island in the Scaterie Island Wilderness Area to a commercial seal harvest. This is the first time that the Act has been changed to accommodate commercial industry inside a wilderness area, and CPAWS is quite concerned about the precedence of this decision for other commercial activities in other wilderness areas.

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It's easy - no cheque-writing or monthly stamps
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WildEast is a biannual publication of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Nova Scotia Chapter. CPAWS is a registered charity (charity #10686 5272 RR0001). Send comments and suggestions to cpawsns@cpawsns.org.

WildEast is printed by Advocate Printing on FSC certified paper with 100% post-consumer content.



Photo Contest

CPAWS NS is launching an annual photo contest and blue jean gala to celebrate the beauty of Nova Scotia. There are picture perfect moments across our province and CPAWS NS wants to put your photography skills to work.

The photo contest runs from the beginning of December 2009 to the end of February 2010. All amateur photographers are welcome to participate in the contest. Entries can be mailed to CPAWS NS or emailed to : cpawsnsphotocontest@gmail.com

In the spring, CPAWS NS will be hosting a Blue Jean Gala to display the winning photographs from each category and celebrate the beauty of our land and seascapes.

Photo categories include: Wildlife, Sea & Landscapes, People in Nature, Winter Wonderland, Nature's Forces, and Nature Close-ups