

BACKGROUND

Nature Trust Announcement

- The Nature Trust announced that it has secured a critical piece of Halifax wilderness located between Timberlea and Hammonds Plains.
- The *Blue Mountain Wilderness Connector* will join together two disjunct parcels of the Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area.
- The property encompasses over 220 hectares (545 acres) of forests, wetlands, rivers and lakes.
- The property is a missing link in a high-profile urban wilderness, identified as an important area for biodiversity, recreational value and ecological connectivity.
- In order to acquire the property and ensure its future, the Nature Trust conducted a successful campaign to raise \$2.7 million.
- Further contributions will support the Nature Trust's work in stewarding this property, in perpetuity.
- The property is part of the Nature Trust's recently announced [Twice the Wild](#) campaign, which aims to double the amount of ecologically significant lands protected by the Nature Trust across Nova Scotia by 2023.
- To donate, volunteer, or find out more, visit nsnt.ca or telephone the Nature Trust at (902) 425-LAND

The Property

- The Blue Mountain Wilderness Connector is so named because it joins two disjunct sections of the provincial Wilderness Area.
- The property encompasses approximately three quarters of shoreline around Long Lake as well as several other unnamed lakes and connecting brooks and stillwaters that provide connectivity to water bodies further downstream, including Maple Lake and Frasers Lake.
- The property provides breeding habitat for several bird Species at Risk (SAR) including Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*) (Threatened - federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) and as Endangered - Nova Scotia Endangered Species Act (NS ESA)), Olive-sided Flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*) (Threatened under both the federal SARA and the NS ESA) and Common Nighthawk (*Chordeiles minor*) (Threatened under both the federal SARA and the NS ESA)
- The property provides confirmed habitat for Priority species identified within the Bird Conservation Strategy for Nova Scotia, including Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), Olive-sided Flycatcher, Blue-headed Vireo (*Vireo solitarius*), Northern Parula (*Parula americana*), Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*), Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*), Blackburnian Warbler (*Dendroica fusca*), Black-and-White Warbler (*Mniotilta varia*), Canada Warbler, and Purple Finch (*Carpodacus purpureus*).
- The property provides breeding habitat for multiple birds that are considered to have Sensitive populations within the province, including: Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (*Empidonax flaviventris*), Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus satrapa*), and Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus calendula*).
- The property is also located within an area known to provide habitat for the Chebucto Peninsula sub-population of mainland Moose which are listed as Endangered under the NS ESA.

- Several areas on the property have been identified by a provincial model as having potential habitat for the Endangered Boreal Felt Lichen (*Erioderma pedicellatum*).

Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes

- The area known as Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes is a vast expanse of undeveloped wilderness located between Hammonds Plains, Timberlea, and Halifax.
- The area encompasses a huge mosaic of forests, wetlands, lakes and rivers.
- The area is identified as part of an important network of ecological connectivity corridors that are essential to maintaining species biodiversity and ecosystem services for the city.
- The area is also an important recreational area, offering a range of opportunities for front- and backcountry hiking, swimming, paddling, angling, and snowshoeing.

Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes History of Protection

- The area has long been identified as an area of ecological and recreational importance in Halifax as far back as 1971.
- Many citizens and community groups have been working for many years to ensure protection for this area.
- Over the years a multitude of organizations have been involved in campaigning for the protection of the area, including the Ecology Action Centre, Our HRM Alliance, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Halifax Northwest Trails Association, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons Environment Committee, as well as thousands of local voices.
- In 2018, the Friends of Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes was formed to provide a unified voice to support and promote the creation of the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Regional Park. Now 400 members, the fast growth of the group is a testament to the importance of the park to the citizens of Halifax.
- The size and boundaries of the proposed park or wilderness vary, as does whether it should be a regional park, a wilderness park etc.—but community groups, Halifax and the Province share the goal of a large area combining both public and private lands, protected for nature and for low impact wilderness recreation use.
- In its 2006 Regional Plan, the then Halifax Regional Municipality identified a Conceptual Park Boundary for a Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Regional Wilderness Park encompassing over 1600 hectares (over 4000 acres) in the eastern end of the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes wilderness which included private, municipal, and provincial crown lands.
- The 2006 Regional Plan indicated that, over time, HRM intends to acquire the necessary lands for public use through a range of methods including partnerships, land trades and conservation easements.
- In 2009, the province designated 1350 hectares (3336 acres) of Crown Lands within and adjacent to HRM's Conceptual Park Boundary as a Wilderness Area, and expanded it to over 1767 hectares (4366 acres) in 2015.
- The city of Halifax purchased lands for the Regional Park in 2018, and approved additional purchases in 2019, totalling 210 hectares (519 acres)
- The Blue Mountain Wilderness Connector property, which split the provincial Wilderness Area into 2 disjunct sections, are outside of HRM's Conceptual Park Boundary, and are therefore not included in Halifax's commitment to acquire for the Blue Mountain – Birch Cove Lakes Regional Wilderness Park.
- However, in July 2020 the City of Halifax did contribute \$750,000 to the Nature Trust's campaign to secure the connector property.

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust

- The Nature Trust is Nova Scotia's leading private land conservation organization, active in protecting our natural legacy since 1994.
- The organization protects ecologically significant natural areas through private land conservation, offering a unique solution for a significant conservation challenge. Unlike most of Canada, over 65% of Nova Scotia is privately owned, not government land. Land Trusts provide landowners with a non-government community based option for protecting their land.
- Private lands include many of the most ecologically important areas, yet face unprecedented development pressures.
- Through permanent conservation easement agreements, we help families to protect, forever, their treasured and ecologically important family lands. We also accept land donations and bequests of land, and in exceptional cases, we purchase outstanding and threatened natural areas.
- All conservation lands entrusted to our care become part of the land legacy that we safeguard for all Nova Scotians. Our commitment is to protect those lands, forever, through ongoing monitoring, stewardship and management.
- An active program of volunteer "property guardians" help to care for this growing network of protected areas.
- Our innovative, community-based educational initiatives are helping to build understanding and appreciation for the natural world. We give Nova Scotians the knowledge and tools they need to take an active part in protecting the places they love and ensuring that the legacy is passed on to future generations.
- The Nature Trust is an active partner and collaborator in conservation with all levels of government, with other non-profits and local communities.

Twice the Wild

- In September 2020, the Nature Trust announced its goal of doubling its protected lands - for a total of 30,000 protected acres - by 2023. This campaign is called [Twice the Wild](#).
- Thanks to matching funds from the government and other major funding partners, every dollar donated to [Twice the Wild](#) will generate four additional dollars to save nature. This includes donations to Save the Wild Blue.
- This campaign will help add land to signature projects across eight focal areas: the St. Mary's River, the Mabou Highlands, Bras d'Or, Kespukwitk, the South Shore Wild Islands Wentworth Valley, the 100 Wild Islands, and urban wildlands like the Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes.
- The campaign will also include creating brand new protected areas across Nova Scotia.
- The lands conserved through Twice the Wild will include critical habitat for wildlife at risk from turtles and terns to marten and moose, coastal island sanctuaries for birds, towering old forests, pristine lakes and rivers.