



For Immediate Release

Nova Scotia Nature Trust ‘Marching in’ to save more Backlands and Blanding’s

**Urgency required to protect both a beloved area in Purcell’s Cove and
a beloved species in Southwestern Nova Scotia.**

MARCH 5, 2024, HALIFAX, NS – Today, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust announces a critical fundraising effort to save two places that lie close to the heart of many. With an urgent deadline of March 31st, the non-profit land trust hopes its call for help will be enough to secure a pair of very special properties: [184 acres of rare habitat for endangered Blanding’s Turtles](#) and a [critical connector piece in the Purcells Cove Backlands](#).

The first property, on McGowan Lake, consists of three parcels west of the provincial Katewe’katik Wilderness Area in southwestern Nova Scotia. Mapped as critical habitat for Blanding’s Turtles, this area gives Nova Scotia’s rarest turtle species a shot at survival and has been a focus for the Nature Trust since 2011, where they have worked steadily to create a refuge ever since.

Blanding’s Turtles are in danger of extinction in Nova Scotia and across Canada. With only 1% of hatchlings surviving, a slow reproduction cycle, significant habitat loss, and other threats such as vehicular collisions, they are in desperate need of protection. Conserving large and relatively intact natural landscapes is essential to provide the diversity of habitat conditions that turtles require for feeding, basking, nesting, and overwintering. The McGowan Lake property is crucial to expanding the protected area and give these turtles a fighting chance.

The second possible property to be saved is found within the Purcells Cove Backlands, an oasis of nature in the heart of Halifax. Popular for hiking and picnicking, swimming and skating, birding and botanizing, the Backlands are also ecologically significant, teeming with unique ecosystems and habitat for many sensitive species, including the threatened Common Nighthawk and globally rare Jack Pine/Broom Crowberry Barrens.

The Nature Trust currently protects four neighbouring properties in the Backlands, and this new 17-acre addition is the opportunity to link them together, allowing increased public access to enjoy the other lands. If successful, the Nature Trust will be able to establish new trails and connect to the existing Backlands’ trail system, fulfilling a long-time wish of those who love to visit this urban wilderness.

Overall, the Purcells Cove Backlands represent a long and successful collaboration for conservation between the Nature Trust, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Halifax Regional Municipality, and the MacIntosh Run Watershed Association. As well, important

community partners like the [Backlands Coalition](#) have played an essential role in caring for this precious place where many seek a connection to nature close to home.

“Both of these properties present a rare opportunity to provide immense conservation value,” says Bonnie Sutherland, Executive Director of the Nature Trust. “There are only a few small populations of Blanding’s left in Nova Scotia, isolated to this area. At risk for years, they are now increasingly fragile, with lakeshore development and climate change also jeopardizing their survival.”

“The property in Purcells Cove is a location we have longed to protect. We are confident that the community, who have already been incredible supporters of the Backlands, will also rally behind this effort and help secure this connecting piece of the puzzle.”

With a combined fundraising target of \$165,000, donations to save the McGowans Lake and Purcells Cove Backlands properties can be made online at www.nsnt.ca or by contacting the Nature Trust directly at nature@nsnt.ca or (902) 425- 5263. If successful, the formal conservation of both lands will contribute to the Nature Trust’s ongoing [Twice the Wild](#) campaign, helping reach its goal of conserving 30,000 acres of Nova Scotia’s most important natural spaces by 2025.

-30-

Twice the Wild

Twice the Wild is an ambitious campaign to double the Nature Trust’s protected areas - from 15,000 to 30,000 acres - by 2025. These achievements contribute directly to the federal government’s commitment to save 30 percent of Canada’s lands by 2030 and answer the global call for urgent action to address the biodiversity and climate change crises.

LEARN MORE

Visit www.nsnt.ca/campaigns/mcgowan-lake and www.nsnt.ca/campaigns/purcells-cove

VIDEO AND IMAGES

<https://nsnt.ca/media>

CONTACT

Anna Weinstein, *Marketing and Communications Lead*

Nova Scotia Nature Trust

anna@nsnt.ca

(902) 499-2825