

BACKGROUND

Nature Trust Announcement

- The Nature Trust announced the conservation of over 650 acres of land on Seal Island, which encompasses approximately 80% of the island.
- Seal Island is one of Nova Scotia's largest and remote islands located 32 km off the southwestern coast.
- It is one of the most important sites for migratory birds in the Maritime region and is renowned for its vast number of birds, variety of species and rarities.
- This news is especially important amidst major declines in migratory bird populations worldwide.
- The land had been threatened by private development, which could have impacted the natural habitats and traditional use of the island.
- The news was shared at a community event in Clark's Harbour on Cape Sable Island—a traditional jumping-off point for reaching remote Seal Island.
- The conservation success was part the Nature Trust's historic "Lasting Landscapes" campaign, an ambitious land conservation campaign launched last year in an effort to help stem the massive loss in biodiversity across the planet
- The campaign was funded in part of the Government of Canada's Nature Fund, part of a national commitment to protect 17% of Canada's lands for biodiversity by 2020, the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust, and generous donors from across the province and beyond who supported the campaign
- Charitable donations can be made to support the protection of additional coastal islands, and to ensure the long-term stewardship and management of this newly protected bird habitat
- To donate, volunteer, or find out more, visit nsnt.ca or telephone the Nature Trust at (902) 425-LAND

Seal Island Conservation Land—conservation values

- Seal Island features a diversity of habitats, from stunted, mossy forest, salt marsh, bog and barachois pond, to rocky shore, sandy beach and grass dunes.
- The habitat diversity, its isolation from the mainland and major human impacts, and location in the flight path of countless migratory birds all contribute to its significance for birds and bird conservation.
- The island's significance for birds is longstanding. Bird records date back to 1901 in the form of notes from the light-keeper. Regular trips by members of the Nova Scotia Bird Society began in 1963 and migration monitoring and scientific publication by the Atlantic Bird Observatory at Acadia University began in 1995.
- Over 330 species have been recorded on Seal Island, using it for breeding, overwintering, migration or storm shelter.
- Recorded species include over 20 nationally and provincially-designated bird species at risk such as Roseate Tern, Harlequin Duck, Canada Warbler, Rusty Blackbird, Red Knot, and Barn Swallow.
- Other birds of conservation concern have been sighted on the island, including Common Eider, Leach's Storm-petrel, and Atlantic Puffin.

- Located strategically on a major migration path called the Atlantic Flyway, the island acts like a migrant trap, drawing in birds from across a vast swath of ocean, and providing a critical refuge for birds to refuel and replenish on their long migratory journeys.
- Astounding numbers of birds have been recorded, including single day reports of 5000 American Robins, 1100 White-throated Sparrows, 1000 Palm Warblers and 500 raptors.
- Seal Island also provides refuge for rarely seen visitors to Nova Scotia, exotic birds blown far off course during storms.
- The island adds to a growing network of protected islands in the area including the Nature Trust's nearby Outer Bald Group and Bon Portage Island Conservation Lands, conserved in partnership with the Nova Scotia Bird Society and Acadia University, respectively.
- With 96% of coastal islands in the area privately-owned and very few (about 6%) formally protected, more island conservation is critical in protecting coastal biodiversity and recovering and sustaining bird populations.

Seal Island Conservation Land—other values

- The conservation of lands on Seal Island also helps to preserve its rich history and culture.
- The island was settled in the 1800s during which time it was used as a fishing base and to help rescue shipwreck survivors.
- Seal Island Lighthouse is one of the oldest wooden lighthouses in Nova Scotia and one of the oldest in Canada. The land surrounding the lighthouse is owned by Transport Canada.
- There are two distinct villages on the island known as the West Side and the East Side.
- Year-round habitation ended in the 1990s, but it is still used seasonally by fishermen, birders, and many local families who have been connected to the island for generations.

The Future of Seal Island

- The 650 acres of conservation land will be left intact as a protected area, conserving the ecological diversity and integrity of the vast coastal wilderness in perpetuity
- The Nature Trust will maintain an active program of land stewardship, ensuring the natural values of the lands are sustained, and that human use is managed to protect these values.
- The Nature Trust has begun collaborative planning for long-term restoration, monitoring, and management of Seal and surrounding islands, in partnership with community members and other research and conservation partners.
- Seal Island residents, birders, and the public will be able to continue to enjoy the lands, as they have for generations.
- Volunteers will be recruited and trained as “property guardians” to help in the long-term care, monitoring and stewardship of the lands
- The Nature Trust will continue its landowner outreach program to work towards protecting additional parcels of coastal island and important bird habitat.

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
- Over the last 25 years, the Nature Trust has successfully and permanently protected over 14,000 acres of significant natural areas, including 114 conservation properties across Nova Scotia, protected for nature, and for future generations of Nova Scotians

The Lasting Landscapes Campaign

- Thanks to major support from the Government of Canada’s Nature Fund, the Nature Trust launched an ambitious land conservation campaign.
- The campaign aimed to protect 17 biodiversity hotspots protecting over 1215 hectares (3000) acres of priority conservation lands within e signature conservation projects across the province.
- For every dollar raised in its public campaign, the Nature Trust could leverage another \$4 to save land. To meet its goal, the Nature Trust had to raise \$850,000 in less than three months, by March 31st, 2019 to leverage over \$3.5 million in funding from the Nature Fund and Nova Scotia’s Crown Share Land Legacy Trust.
- Thanks to an incredible outpouring of public support, the historic Lasting Landscapes campaign surpassed its targets, leveraging over \$5 million to protect 3,200 acres across 17 new conservation sites.
- This was the largest federal investment ever in protecting Nova Scotia’s biodiversity

Canada Nature Fund

- In response to the growing global biodiversity crisis and international commitments to address the crisis, the Government of Canada has committed to doubling its protected areas by 2020, and setting aside 17% of Canada’s land and inland waters for conservation
- They have committed \$1.3 billion to biodiversity conservation over five years, the largest such investment in Canadian history
- The Canada Nature Fund is a \$500 million program to support biodiversity conservation efforts of non-government and other non-federal government partners whose commitment is critical to achieving success in nature conservation
- Canada Nature Fund contributions are matched by philanthropic foundations, corporations, not-for-profits, provinces, territories and other partners, raising a total of \$1 billion for conservation action.

- The Fund supports the establishment of a coordinated network of protected and conserved areas and helps with the conservation of species at risk and their habitats
- To launch the program, the Government invested the first \$15 million with key conservation leaders across Canada through the Quick Start program
- Quick Start was designed to support projects which had a short timeline, and would quickly add to Canada's total protected and conserved lands.
- The Nature Trust was chosen as one of a small number of partners selected to receive funding in 2018/19 to deliver quick wins for Canada's biodiversity. The Nature Trust received \$1.8 million towards private land conservation directly benefitting the 17% by 2020 goal.
- Additional Nature Fund programs will launch in the summer/fall of 2019

The Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust

- The Land Legacy Trust is a \$23 million fund established up by the Province in 2008 to support private land conservation in Nova Scotia. It was funded from Crown Share Payments
- This provincial investment has been a 'game changer' in Nova Scotia, significantly advancing the scale and pace of private land conservation
- It has supported the protection of almost 100 properties that total 7,775 hectares
- Funding committed to date, just over \$10 million, has leveraged the securement of conservation efforts worth over \$32 million
- It has provided vital funding for the Nature Trust, including work that initiated many of the major land assemblages proposed in the Lasting Landscapes Campaign