For Immediate Release

MapleCross Invests in Nova Scotia Nature: Helps Save Spectacle Island Sanctuary for Birds

August 28, 2020 (Halifax)—The Nova Scotia Nature Trust celebrated saving another important sanctuary for birds today with acquisition of Spectacle Island, near Nova Scotia's southern tip. They also celebrated an inspiring new investor in Nova Scotia's natural legacy—the MapleCross fund. MapleCross donated $75,000 to acquire the island, part a group of south shore islands recognized as globally significant for birds.

Spectacle Island's protection is an important win for birds and for bird lovers alike.

From coastal barrens, bogs and cobble beaches to salt marshes and lagoons, the 60 acre Spectacle Island supports diverse habitats that provide much-needed sanctuary for breeding and nesting birds, and for birds resting and feeding along the Atlantic Flyway migration route.

A diversity of shorebirds, from plovers and sandpipers to whimbrels, willets and endangered Red Knots use the island's wetlands to refuel and replenish during both spring and fall migrations, sometimes in great numbers. With shorebird populations declining 40% over the last decade globally, protecting one their important migratory stopovers is a heartening achievement. A range of other migrating birds, from raptors to songbirds also use Spectacle and surrounding islands, as the critical last stop before their long migration south, and the first landfall upon their return. The islands host nesting birds as well, from terns, gulls and petrels to a diversity of songbirds, including Barn and Bank Swallows, both listed on Canada's endangered species list. Winter visitors include other species of conservation concern such as Harlequin Ducks, American Black Duck and Eiders.

Spectacle Island adds to a growing legacy of over 1000 acres of bird habitat secured by the Nature Trust in the Tusket Islands and surrounding area, including the adjacent Peases Island, acquired earlier this spring, the Bald Islands, Seal and Bon Portage Islands. These islands are highly significant for the conservation and recovery of birds, many of which face alarming declines here in Nova Scotia and globally.

The story is welcome news for Nova Scotians who are rediscovering a love and appreciation for nature and for the outdoors in the face of COVID-19 and the profound changes it has made to our lives. There is growing support and a sense of urgency for protecting Nova Scotia's natural spaces. The islands are popular with locals, boaters and birders, who enjoy their wild beauty, marvel at the number and diversity of birds, and enjoy the thrill of spotting rarities who seek refuge on the islands in big winds and Atlantic storms.

The investment by the MapleCross fund is also exciting news because it brings a new source of funding for urgent land conservation efforts in Nova Scotia. The Ontario-based founders of the MapleCross fund, Isobel Ralston and Jan Oudenes, are avid outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers. They have chosen land conservation as their cause of choice and have very generously invested in numerous land trust projects across Canada in the last three years.

The couple is delighted to be supporting their first project in Nova Scotia, and one with such a significant and lasting impact for nature, and for surrounding communities too.

"As Canadians we often take for granted the amazing legacy of nature we have all around us," Isobel noted. "But it is disappearing. Once places like Spectacle Island are developed, we can't get nature back. By taking the initiative now to protect these very special places, we are ensuring that our unique biodiversity survives, and that current and future generations will be able to connect to nature and experience its wonder."

The Nature Trust is thrilled to see the MapleCross fund investing in Nova Scotia and hopes this will be just the first of many projects for MapleCross in the province.

“At a time when Nova Scotians are appreciating and valuing nature more than ever, we are absolutely delighted the MapleCross fund has chosen to invest in Nova Scotia’s nature,” noted Nature Trust Executive Director, Bonnie Sutherland. “We love that they are urging and inspiring others to follow their lead, amplifying our conservation impact.”

Jan and Isobel know they can’t protect Canada’s biodiversity alone, so they are strategically using their support to leverage new and increased investments in nature. With Spectacle Island, their support has already unlocked $100,000 in funding from the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust and the Canada Nature Fund and inspired local Nova Scotians and their families to donate as well.

“The acquisition of Spectacle Island by our conservation partners, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust and the MapleCross fund, makes an important contribution to preserving Canada’s coastal legacy and protecting migratory birds and their habitats. Our government is proud to support this initiative, which brings us one step closer to reaching our goal of conserving a quarter of Canada’s lands by 2025,” said the Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

Sutherland urged Nova Scotians to jump on the unique opportunity to save this and other special places across Nova Scotia.

“We have an exciting window of opportunity with the MapleCross fund, the Canada Nature Fund and the Crown Share Land Legacy Trust all stepping up with major investments in nature conservation, right here in Nova Scotia. But to unlock these funds, we need to leverage matching donations from the community.”

So the Nature Trust, Jan and Isobel are urging Nova Scotians to step up and show they too care about protecting the incredible biodiversity they love, special places like Spectacle Island, by making a charitable donation today.

As Isobel noted, “If we don’t take action for nature in our own backyards, who will?”

Charitable donations can be made online at nsnt.ca or by calling (902) 425-LAND. Automatic monthly donations can help save and protect nature all year long.

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Photos and maps available at nsnt.ca/media

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