

CONSERVATION IMPACT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION PROGRAM

2019-2020



NATURE
CONSERVANCY
CANADA







About the Nature Conservancy of Canada

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is Canada's leading national private, not-for-profit land conservation organization. We protect and care for our most ecologically significant lands and waters, and the species they sustain.

Our evidence-based conservation planning process drives our work. We partner with individuals, governments, Indigenous communities, corporations and others to achieve lasting conservation solutions. We secure properties through donation, purchase, conservation agreement and the relinquishment of other legal interests in land. Once secured, we manage these lands for the long term.

We are proud to introduce the **2019–2020 Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) Impact Report**, which summarizes what the partnership achieved in the course of the last year and since its inception. The report also includes accomplishments from our partners, including Ducks Unlimited Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada, the Canadian Land Trust Working Group and national and regional land trusts.

NCC respectfully acknowledges that the work we do across the country is on the traditional territories of many Indigenous Nations and communities, past and present. NCC thanks and honours these original caretakers, and acknowledges the ongoing work and presence of Indigenous Peoples in Canada today.

natureconservancy.ca/NHCP
245 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 410
Toronto, Ontario, Canada | M4P 3J1

For questions about the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, contact Paul Hewer, Manager, Government Relations
1-877-231-3552 x. 2268
paul.hewer@natureconservancy.ca

™Trademarks owned by The Nature Conservancy of Canada

Table of contents

- 5 A partnership for conservation**
- 6 Natural Heritage Conservation Program results**
- 7 Indigenous engagement
+ Land trust capacity development**
- 8 British Columbia**
Protecting an estuary in Bella Coola
- 9 Alberta**
Conserving areas near Elk Island National Park
- 10 Saskatchewan**
Protecting drinking water on the Prairies
- 11 Manitoba**
Collaborating with ranchers to conserve grassland habitat
- 12 Map**
Projects conserved under the Natural Heritage Conservation Program
- 14 Ontario**
Honouring a conservation legacy
- 15 Quebec**
Conserving an important wildlife crossing
- 16 New Brunswick**
Protecting a community's water supply
- 17 Prince Edward Island**
Buffering land from a rising sea
- 18 Nova Scotia**
Protecting urban wilderness
- 19 Newfoundland & Labrador**
Protecting a key forest through a family estate donation
- 20 Supporting community conservation**
- 23 Ducks Unlimited Canada**

A partnership for conservation



These are extraordinary times.

Canadians have been deeply impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. They have also shown enormous resilience and determination in the face of hardship.

COVID-19 has underlined for us all the importance of connecting with nature. As Canadians, we are fortunate to have an abundance of nature in our backyards — a gift that comes with tremendous responsibility to protect it.

Connecting with nature has proven health benefits and protecting it helps in the fight against climate change. Healthy ecosystems are critical to the continued health of human beings, which is why the Government of Canada is committed to protecting a quarter of Canada's lands and a quarter of its oceans by 2025.

This year marks the inaugural year of the Natural Heritage Conservation Program. Under the Program, funded through a major investment from the Canada Nature Fund, our government is collaborating with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and its partners to establish new protected and conserved areas from coast to coast to coast.

The Government of Canada also works with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and many other partners, through the Ecological Gifts Program to provide tax incentives to Canadians who donate ecologically sensitive land to qualified organizations. Together, these programs are helping to make significant contributions toward our conservation goals.

On behalf of Environment and Climate Change Canada, I would like to congratulate the Nature Conservancy of Canada and its partners for their achievements in wildlife habitat conservation and stewardship. I look forward to seeing what we will accomplish in the coming years under this new program.

The Honourable Jonathan Wilkinson, PC, MP

Minister of Environment and Climate Change
Government of Canada



I'm often asked why we do what we do. Why would the Nature Conservancy of Canada invest time and resources to protect natural systems and the plants and animals that rely upon them?

My answer is simple. We can't be healthy in an unhealthy world.

Nature, when given a chance, does an amazing job providing us with what we need for our well-being — from clean air and water, to buffering us against the impacts of climate change, and the importance of nature to our mental health, especially during the times of COVID-19.

Canadians, perhaps more than any other nation on the globe, understand the imperative of working together to protect our lands, freshwater and oceans. The Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP), part of the larger Canada Nature Fund, is a unique partnership model, that brings people together from coast-to-coast-to-coast for the sake of nature.

On behalf of the Nature Conservancy of Canada I'd like to express our gratitude to Jonathan Wilkinson, Canada's Minister of Environment Climate Change, and to his staff for this important investment in our future. We are grateful for the support of our NHCP partners, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Canadian Land Trust Working group, along with all the local land trusts that are making a difference in their communities. Finally, to all the individual Canadians who dug deep to match program investments, thank you for your generosity and your belief in our mission.

There has never been a more urgent need for a program like the NHCP, to help Canada reach its conservation targets. We hope the stories contained in this review of the first year of the NHCP will attest to the program's impact and inspire us all to do more.

John Lounds
President & CEO
Nature Conservancy of Canada

A successful first year

Shaw Wilderness Park, Halifax

Surprisingly close to downtown Halifax,

there is wild land. From a high point, surrounded by rocky barrens and the peace of the forest, the city's tallest buildings are in view. The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has been working to conserve this natural oasis, now called the Shaw Wilderness Park. The 155-hectare (383-acre) park marries nature conservation with nature-based recreation. The project is happening thanks to the many citizens of Halifax who are passionate about exploring, and protecting, this land.

An advocate for the park from the beginning, Kathleen Hall grew up on Williams Lake. As children, she and her sister Debbie climbed rocks and explored the forest until the sun went down. "I have always believed that these lands should remain as they are, and have been, for centuries," Kathleen explains. "Our parents instilled in us a great sense of respect and responsibility for our environment." Kathleen, Debbie and many members of their extended family contributed to the establishment of the park.

Like many other Canadians, the Hall family came together under the Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) to protect a place they love.

Launched in 2019 with a \$100-million investment from the Government of Canada, the NHCP is administered by NCC, in partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), Wildlife Habitat Canada, Canadian Land Trust Working Group and the country's land trusts. The NHCP continues the momentum of the previous federal partnership administered by NCC: the Natural Areas Conservation Program (NACP), by encouraging Canadians to conserve nature.

Each dollar invested by the Government of Canada will be matched by two dollars raised by NCC, DUC and Canada's land trusts.

In its first year in action, the NHCP helped NCC, DUC and land trusts conserve over 13,000 hectares (32,124 acres) and protect land for 20 species at risk. Projects ranged from several hundred hectares to less than a dozen. But each newly conserved property will expand Canada's network of protected areas, thanks to a federal investment of \$25 million, matched with \$47M from NHCP partners. These matching funds were provided by generous Canadians, corporations, foundations and other levels of government. Thanks to these contributors, NCC and its partners will be able to actively protect and manage these lands for generations to come.

Shaw Wilderness Park is an example of the NHCP at work. Contributions from the provincial and municipal governments, from corporations (The Shaw Group) and individuals like the Hall family, together with the NHCP, have now conserved a treasure in urban Halifax. In its first year, the NHCP also supported capacity development for conservation organizations, and engagement with Indigenous communities (page 7).

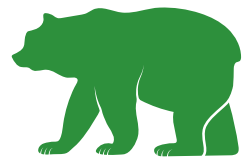
NCC and its partners are grateful for this special partnership and proud of its accomplishments. This document provides a selection of the NHCP's successes in its first year. They represent what is possible when Canadians come together to conserve the lands we hold dear and protect them to ensure that the future of Canada's natural spaces is bright.

COMMITMENTS MADE THROUGH THE NHCP

The NHCP will propel NCC and its partners to achieve important things for conservation in Canada.



Protect 200,000 hectares
(over 494,210 acres)
across Canada by 2023.



Provide habitat for Canada's species at risk,
including those listed in Canada's
Species at Risk Act.



Contribute to the Government of Canada's commitment
to conserve 25 per cent of Canada's
lands and freshwater by 2025.



Capacity development within conservation organizations

The Ontario Land Trust Alliance, Land Trust Alliance of British Columbia and Réseau de milieux naturels protégés have rolled out support tools and education resources in the form of roundtables, workshops and webinars to help the land trust community work toward compliance with the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices.

In 2019, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) also began making improvements towards compliance with the Canadian Land Trust Standard 3, Practice B (Board Composition and Structure).

In the first year of the NHCP, the Nature Conservancy of Canada has taken initial steps toward the enhancements to our prioritization tools, training in the use of conservation planning tools, improvements to NCC's data management system and investment in new field-based technologies.



Indigenous engagement

NCC and its partners are committed to working closely and collaboratively with Indigenous communities to advance conservation and to make steps towards reconciliation. NCC has identified several objectives to increase and improve engagement with Indigenous Peoples through conservation over the course of the NHCP.

Under the first year of NHCP, NCC has been in discussion with Indigenous communities and Nations regarding specific conservation projects. Understanding the perspectives and interests of our partners and collaborators is key to ensuring a successful project outcome. NCC staff have also participated in several cultural competency training exercises designed to create a strong understanding of the shared history of Canada. NCC has also begun discussions with at least two Indigenous communities regarding the potential for an Indigenous-led land trust.

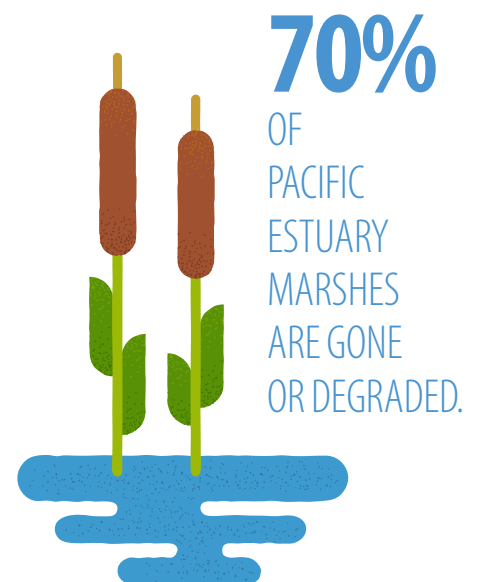


Protecting an estuary in Bella Coola

Located within BC's famed Great Bear Rainforest, the Bella Coola Estuary supports a rich tapestry of natural and cultural features. Salmon, bears, eagles, waterfowl and shorebirds all congregate here. The estuary provides essential habitat for a number of species at risk, including grizzly bear (special concern) and marbled murrelet (threatened). For thousands of years, this estuary has provided a bounty of resources to the people who have lived in and moved through the valley. The estuary sits on the edge of the town of Bella Coola, and the land is frequently visited by local residents.

In January 2020, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) acquired a 53-hectare (131-acre) property on the estuary. The Tidal Flats Conservation Area is adjacent to other conservation lands and was the last unprotected private property at the mouth of the river. Tidal Flats is NCC's first project in the valley and was welcomed by the community. The protection of these lands is supported by the Nuxalk Nation, whose community members frequently use the Tidal Flats lands for cultural and recreational purposes.

Natural Heritage Conservation Program funds were leveraged to secure generous contributions from several organizations and individuals, including the Sitka Foundation, The Vista Fund, held at Nicola Private Wealth Giving Foundation, British Columbia Conservation Foundation, Jack & Sylvia Gin Foundation, Geoff & Karen Cowper, Eric Grace and the Takla Foundation.



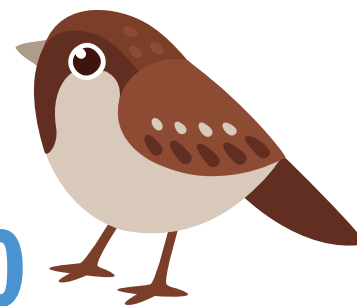
Conserving areas near Elk Island National Park

Just east of Edmonton, near Elk Island National Park, natural forces converged over thousands of years to create an area covered with forests, lakes and wetlands. This area is now home to an incredible diversity of life. It is an important place for Indigenous Peoples, including the Niitsítpiis-stahkoi, Métis, Plains Cree and Cree. The area is also known in nêhiyawêwin as *Amiskwaciy* — meaning Beaver Hills.

The area is a globally significant area for migrating birds. Each year hundreds of thousands of waterfowl, wading birds and shorebirds stop here to rest and feed. It is also home to large mammals, such as moose and elk, which need to travel large distances to find forage, especially in the winter.

Thankfully, the Beaver Hills area has a rich conservation history and features some of the oldest protected areas in Canada. In 1892, the Federal Department of the Interior established a forest here. The area gained official designation as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2016, recognizing that the Beaver Hills has achieved a harmonious balance between people and nature.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) has been active in this area since 2002. With the help of the NHCP, NCC recently secured three new properties totalling 127 hectares (314 acres) here. But the conservation of the Beaver Hills was a team effort, achieved through partnerships with the many conservation organizations working in the area, including Alberta Fish and Game Association, Edmonton & Area Land Trust, Alberta Conservation Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada and the Beaver Hills Initiative. A portion of this project was donated to NCC under the Government of Canada's Ecological Gifts Program.



OVER
130

BIRD SPECIES HAVE BEEN
OBSERVED AT THE BEAVER HILLS
BIRD OBSERVATORY.





BUFFALO POUND LAKE PROVIDES DRINKING WATER TO NEARLY **300,000** PEOPLE, OR ALMOST ONE-QUARTER OF SASKATCHEWAN'S POPULATION.



Protecting drinking water on the Prairies

Isobel Ralston and Jan Oudenes, from Ontario, are the founders of the MapleCross Fund and are avid nature lovers. The couple was thrilled to support a conservation project in Buffalo Pound with an incredible, lasting impact for nature and the surrounding communities.

The area features native grasslands, one of the most endangered ecosystems in the world. Adjacent to the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC's) property, Buffalo Pound Lake provides drinking water for approximately 25 per cent of the province's population — nearly 300,000 people — including Regina and Moose Jaw.

Over the past 25 years, Saskatchewan has lost more than 809,000 hectares (2 million acres) of native grassland. Today, less than 20 per cent remains in the province. This presents serious

challenges for plants and animals that use this habitat. This includes over 70 species listed under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*, such as Sprague's pipit (threatened), bobolink (threatened), Baird's sparrow (special concern), American badger (special concern) and northern leopard frog (special concern).

With the assistance of the NHCP, NCC acquired a 742-hectare (1,833-acre) site consisting of native grasslands and seven kilometres of shoreline along the north shore of Buffalo Pound Lake. Native grasslands also sequester and store carbon.

Despite never having been to Buffalo Pound Lake, Ralston and Oudenes had travelled through the province. "Reflecting upon our visits to Saskatchewan, which helped guide our

decision, we recalled a surprise sighting of pronghorns, a most magnificent sunset and a full moon rising over a great expanse of prairie," explains the couple about their motivation to support the project. "Buffalo Pound became of special interest when we recognized its significant ecological importance to both wildlife and the nearby communities," says Ralston. To help protect the area, the couple committed to matching donations, dollar-for-dollar, through their MapleCross Fund for a six-week period to help complete NCC's fundraising drive.

This project was also supported by the Government of Saskatchewan's Fish and Wildlife Development Fund, Chris Selness and Wendy Woodard, Susan and Brad Hertz and Leslie Ann Chandler. Many private donors also supported this conservation project.

Collaborating with ranchers to conserve grassland habitat

Perched on the edge of the Assiniboine

River, bordered by oak savannah and forest, the rolling dry mixed-grass prairie of Waggle Springs hosts nationally threatened birds, including Sprague's pipit. The freshwater springs here are aquifer-fed and support the nationally rare round-leaf monkeyflower.

Located close to Brandon, Waggle Springs is part of a large grassland expanse, which started with a 176-hectare (434-acre) acquisition in 2016, followed by an additional 130 hectares (320 acres) in 2017.

Now totalling 369 hectares (914 acres), the Waggle Springs complex supports several provincially and/or nationally listed species, including prairie skink, Sprague's pipit, northern leopard frog and monarch. The property's mixed-grass prairie supports rare grassland birds and plants, such as grasshopper sparrow and woolly milkweed.

Historically, the owners used the land for cattle grazing, which helped to maintain the property's biodiversity. Collaboration with farmers and other landowners in the area make it possible to develop effective land management on the

property, including continued grazing, which benefits both the local livestock industry and the native grasslands.

Gord Beddome is still grazing his livestock at Waggle Springs, now conserved with the support of the NHCP. "Environmental protection and livestock production can work hand in hand for the benefit of all participants," he says. "I know I've become a more knowledgeable grazer."

NCC engages with local communities in the area, through events, such as Open Farm Day, as well as hosting Conservation Volunteers events in the area. These provide an opportunity for community members to contribute to the maintenance and recovery of ecosystems and species at risk.

Waggle Springs is on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabe, Métis and Sioux, and is also home to an ongoing pilot project led by the West Region Treaty 2 & 4 Health Services, wherein certain plants are sustainably harvested for traditional use.

The addition of this third Waggle Springs property is one more step toward conserving the fragmented prairie grasslands.



GRASSLAND BIRD POPULATIONS IN CANADA HAVE DECLINED BY **59%** SINCE 1970.





Natural Heritage Conservation Program

NCC, DUC and land trust securement projects as of March 31, 2020

- Nature Conservancy of Canada securement project
- Ducks Unlimited Canada securement project
- Land Trusts Conservation Fund securement project





Honouring a conservation legacy

John “Jack” Hunter Allum was a lifelong conservationist with a fondness for forests. Forty years ago, Allum acquired a property boasting granite ridges, wetlands, streambanks and forests in the Frontenac Arch, 25 kilometres from Kingston. He spent years expanding the forest by restoring old farm fields by planting 20,000 native trees. After his death, his sons honoured his wishes and sold the 119-hectare (294-acre) property to the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC). NCC acquired the property with assistance from the NHCP.

The Frontenac Arch brings together the northern Canadian Shield forests and southern Carolinian influences. This unique overlap creates a great richness of plant, insect and animal species, including numerous species at risk. It is one of the most important forest corridors east of the Rockies.

Part of the Frontenac Forests Important Bird Area and Provincially Significant Leland Wetlands, the area’s incredibly rich natural environment and history was recognized in 2002 when it became a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve.

It is thanks to landowners like Allum that NCC has been able to protect this unique natural area. The NHCP allows NCC and other conservation organizations to acquire and protect spaces that are special to Canada. NHCP funds applied to this project were matched by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, through the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* and many generous donors.

THE ECO-SERVICES OF
THE FORESTS IN THIS
REGION ARE VALUED
AT APPROXIMATELY
\$20,000
PER HECTARE PER YEAR.



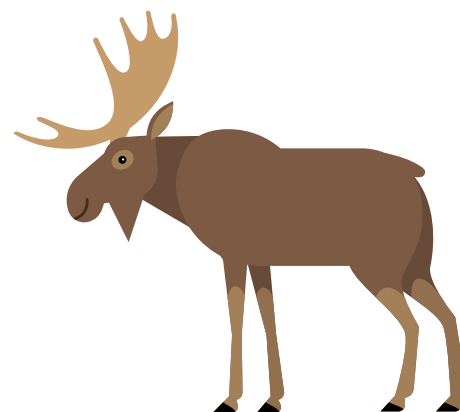
Conserving an important wildlife crossing

Mammals with large home ranges, such as moose, need to travel long distances to meet their needs. This often includes crossing roads, where there is a risk of vehicular collisions. The NHCP supports organizations like the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Conservation Manitoou to work on projects to improve safety for both motorists and wildlife.

In 2019, NCC purchased 27 ecologically important hectares (67 acres) on Route 117 in Ivry-sur-le-Lac, in Quebec's Laurentian Mountains. Located halfway between two forested areas of regional importance, the property is the site of a key crossing area for safe travel across the road for animals. NCC and its partners will implement property improvements to make it easier for wildlife to cross more safely. This effort is part of a larger-scale wildlife corridor project that NCC is working on with many groups and government agencies to protect and expand ecological corridors across the province.

The forested mountainside property, known as Wildlife Crossing Ivry, features a wetland and a great diversity of trees, including sugar maple, yellow birch and balsam fir, and animals, such as coyote, moose and waterfowl.

Support through the NHCP was leveraged from contributions from additional sources, including Quebec's Ministère de l'Environnement et de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, through the Ensemble pour la nature project, Hydro-Québec, the Fondation de la faune du Québec, the MRC des Laurentides, as a part of the Territorial Development Fund, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Other partners who contributed to the success of this project included Concordia University, Conservation Manitoou, Éco-Corridors Laurentiens, Corporation du parc linéaire du P'tit Train du Nord and the Woodcock Foundation.



THE HOME RANGE
OF A MOOSE IS
20-40
SQUARE KMS.





Protecting a community's water supply

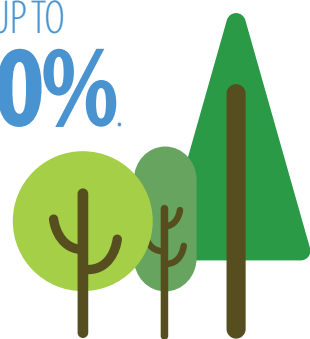
In the southeast corner of New Brunswick, between the village of Riverside-Albert and the Caledonia Gorge Provincial Protected Natural Area, lies a spectacular Acadian forest with rare, older-growth trees. The forest includes mature red spruce, sugar maple, red maple and yellow birch, most of which are more than 80 years old.

Less than five per cent of mature Acadian forest, the original forest type of the Maritimes, remains intact due to centuries of settlement and harvesting. In February, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) purchased 40 hectares (100 acres) of this forest.

This project is the result of a remarkable collaboration. While searching for old forest to protect, NCC staff discovered water reservoirs for the Village of Riverside-Albert. The water was provided to residents under a 100-year lease that was about to expire. NCC staff met with the landowner, then the village, to work out an arrangement that would benefit everyone. With the help of multiple partners, the land was secured for the conservation of both the forest habitat and the water supply.

The NHCP helped inspire contributions from other sources. The project was also supported by the Province of New Brunswick, New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund, Shepody Fish and Game Association, Hewitt Foundation, Lockhart Foundation, American Friends of Canadian Nature and many private donors.

FOR EVERY 10% INCREASE IN FOREST COVER IN A WATERSHED, WATER TREATMENT COSTS CAN BE DECREASED BY UP TO **20%**.



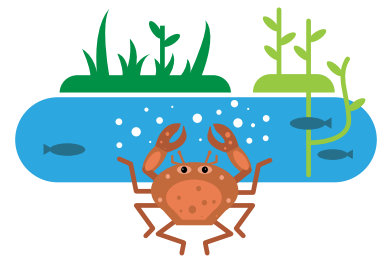


Buffering land from a rising sea

Salt marshes are critically important for conservation, both for wildlife and for local communities. Yet only one per cent of PEI's land mass is made up of them, making salt marshes a priority for conservation. These unique habitats play a crucial role in buffering coastal communities from rising sea levels and more frequent storm events. Protecting them is an important way to adapt to a changing climate and minimize coastal erosion.

The Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC's) Abrams Village Nature Reserve, west of Summerside, surrounds one of PEI's most impressive and undisturbed salt marshes. In February, NCC expanded the reserve by conserving an additional 10 hectares (25 acres) of forested land bordering the Abrams Village salt marsh.

Funding for this conservation project was provided by the Government of Canada, through the NHCP, and by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, through the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act*. American Friends of Canadian Nature, Cooke Insurance Group and many private donors also supported this project.



2/3

OF THE ATLANTIC COASTAL
SALT MARSHES ARE GONE.



Protecting urban wilderness

About 80 per cent of Canadians live in or very close to urban areas, making urban conservation increasingly important. Thanks to the support from the NHCP, the residents of the greater Halifax area will be able to enjoy 155 hectares (383 acres) of wilderness right in the city. From a high point in the newly conserved Shaw Wilderness Park, surrounded by rocky barrens and the peace of the forest, the city's tallest buildings are in view.

Marrying nature conservation with nature-based recreation, the park provides native habitat for more than 40 species of breeding birds and other wildlife. With its network of rugged trails and access to two lakes, it is a haven for hikers. The park also protects a rare jack pine/broom crowberry ecosystem that is unique to Nova Scotia.

After many years in the making, the project was helped over the finish line thanks to the NHCP. The NHCP inspired donations from local residents (through the Keep Halifax Wild fundraising campaign), Halifax Regional Municipality, the Province of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust.

A long-term plan for the wilderness park's management will be developed by the Halifax Regional Municipality, the Nature Conservancy of Canada and the local community.



5 KMS

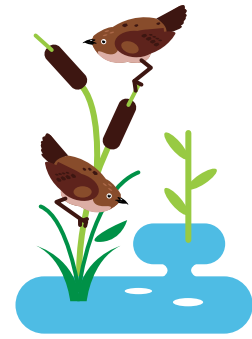
DISTANCE BETWEEN
DOWNTOWN HALIFAX AND
SHAW WILDERNESS PARK.

Family estate donation protects key forest

Newfoundland and Labrador's Codroy Valley lies in the shadow of the province's Long Range Mountains. The scenic, rolling landscape here follows the Grand Codroy River to the ocean. The estuary, where the river meets the ocean, is both a Wetland of International Importance and an Important Bird Area. To call it a haven for nature lovers, historians, travellers and, most notably, birds would be most accurate.

David and Phyllis Pike were avid naturalists who loved Newfoundland and Labrador. They were also supporters of the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) for many years. Thanks to a generous donation from their estates, NCC was able to purchase an additional 19 hectares (47 acres) in the Codroy Valley. The mainly forested property is a mix of balsam fir, black spruce, white spruce and yellow birch, which provides potential habitat for federally listed species at risk, such as blue felt lichen and red crossbill (percna subspecies).

The Pikes' estate provided critical private funding that was needed to secure matched contributions from the Government of Canada, through the NHCP. Without the Pikes' support, this project would not have been possible.



37

NUMBER OF WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE IN CANADA.





Supporting community conservation

Susan Walmer, a resident of the Oak Ridges Moraine, describes a special memory of a visit

to one of her favourite places on the moraine, where the impact of conservation hit home: “There is a very special property with a panoramic view that has now been protected thanks to conservation actions. Here, as the sun set, the fireflies danced and the coyotes howled, I felt a magical moment of peace and joy. The worries of the world disappeared for that moment. I smiled, and then pinched myself as a reminder that although this is ‘work,’ it is also my life’s passion and purpose.”

Walmer joined the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust (ORMLT) as its executive director in 2009. “I love every moment protecting private lands and making people’s dreams come true,” reflects Walmer. “The preservation of these sensitive lands, species and the rural character of this unique landform area was and still is very important to me, our board and supporters.”

The ORMLT was one of several groups that received funds under the NHCP’s Land Trusts Conservation Fund (LTCF) in the first year of the program. Under the LTCF, land trusts can apply to a fund of \$4.5 million to work in their communities. Partners at Wildlife Habitat Canada administer the funding program with helpful guidance from the Canadian Land Trust Working Group.

“The support of the LTCF strengthens and acknowledges the importance that by working together, at all levels of government, donors and conservation organizations, we can continue to protect important places on and near the moraine and across Canada,” says Walmer.

In the past year the LTCF has assisted 22 land trusts from six provinces. These organizations completed 31 projects resulting in 3,342 hectares (8,258 acres) of habitat for species at risk. In the following pages are stories about some of the projects completed this year, where local land trusts protected natural areas for the sake of nature and for the neighbouring communities.

Organizations receiving LTCF contributions in the 2019-2020 program year:

- BC Parks Foundation
- Bruce Trail Conservancy
- Comité régional pour la protection des falaises
- Corridor appalachien
- Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy
- Fondation SETHY
- Georgian Bay Land Trust
- Héritage Plein Air du Nord
- Kawartha Land Trust
- Land Conservancy for Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington
- Nature-Action Québec
- Nova Scotia Nature Trust
- Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust
- Ontario Farmland Trust
- Ontario Nature
- Regroupement pour la pérennité de l’île Verte
- Southern Alberta Land Trust
- Thames Talbot Land Trust
- The Couchiching Conservancy
- The Land Conservancy of British Columbia
- The Nature Trust of British Columbia
- The Nature Trust of New Brunswick

Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust

Beeton Heritage Forest and Adjala

The Oak Ridges Moraine in southern Ontario

is a rich natural corridor in close proximity to Canada's largest urban centre. Stretching 160 kilometres from Dufferin County in the west to Northumberland County in the east, the moraine offers plenty of natural splendour for millions of Canadians. As the moraine is also a source of drinking water for 250,000 Ontarians, it's no surprise that many local residents support the protection of its lands. It is also the headwaters for all of the rivers that flow through Toronto.

Within the moraine lies the Beeton forest, a site of significant importance to the Huron-Wendat Nation. It was the site of one of the Nation's palisaded villages until the 1700s.

In 2016, the ORMLT approached the Town of New Tecumseth, expressing an interest in the long-term securement and stewardship of the Beeton Heritage Forest. The ORMLT wanted to assess the natural values of the property and

resources required for long-term stewardship and protection. The town agreed and consequently donated the lands to the ORMLT to oversee its environmental protection.

The NHCP supported ORMLT's efforts to conserve 44 hectares (108 acres) of the Beeton Forest. The forest is home to species at risk, such as butternut (endangered), barn swallow (threatened), red-headed woodpecker (endangered), eastern wood-pewee (special concern) and monarch (endangered). Local residents enjoy the property's diverse wetlands, forests and meadows.

The Huron-Wendat Nation was among the partners who helped make the project a success.

"The Huron-Wendat Nation is very proud to partner with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust to celebrate the protection of natural and cultural resources that are most precious to us: the forest and our heritage," said Grand Chief Konrad Sioui of

the Huron-Wendat Nation. "This was a place where our ancestors lived full lives within a palisaded village enclosing dozens of longhouses. Several hundred of our ancestors lived in this forest although at the time, five hundred years ago, much of the forest was cleared for agricultural fields. It is comforting to see the landscape and forest returned to its original grandeur while acknowledging our culture, history and heritage."

Meanwhile, in the township of Adjala-Tosorontio, the ORMLT protected 29 hectares (72 acres) of forests and meadows, thanks to a landowner's generous donation. The property features towering maple trees in the deciduous forest, providing habitat for at-risk birds, including wood thrush (threatened) and eastern wood-pewee (special concern) and barn swallows (threatened) that show off their aerial acrobatics while hunting insects. This project was donated to ORMLT under the Government of Canada's Ecological Gifts Program.





Corridor appalachien Mont Foster

When Mélanie Lelièvre was a young child, she first became aware of the Amazon forest and the threat of its destruction. It was that discovery that prompted her to commit her life to protecting Quebec's own forests and animals. Now as the executive of a regional land trust, Corridor Appalachien, she makes a concrete difference in the region where she lives. "I think it's the most beautiful area in the world!" she exclaims.

Lelièvre recalls meeting a landowner in the forest that he and Corridor Appalachien had worked to protect together in Mont Foster. "[This landowner] was so relieved to know that we would be working with him, step by step, to conserve his land. In that moment, I understood the important role of conservation organizations when working with landowners. And I also understood how landowners love their forests and are tied to them. That's why they want to conserve them for the long term."

It was not long ago that the forests of Mont Foster were being considered for vacation property development. For more than a decade, the residents of these local communities have been working together to raise funds to protect this natural area. Recently, residents of the nearby towns of Bolton-Ouest and Saint-Étienne-de-Bolton completed a major fundraising campaign to support Corridor Appalachien in acquiring 215 hectares (530 acres) on Mont Foster and protect it for the long term.

Corridor Appalachien accessed funds from the NHCP and added it to contributions from more than 250 individual local donors. The successful fundraising campaign means the local residents and visitors to the area can enjoy the network of trails on the mountain and its wonderful views long into the future.

"The NHCP allows us to take on very ambitious projects that we would not otherwise be able to

complete," says Lelièvre. "These large-scale conservation projects are complex and require support at all levels. Without the support of the NHCP we wouldn't have made such great strides in the region. The Mont Foster project is a great example of this."

The project also ensures that the plants and animals in the area enjoy their own natural network of corridors. The area is home to several species at risk, including spring salamander (threatened), Canada warbler (threatened), wood thrush (threatened) and eastern wood-pewee (special concern). Large mammals that need large ranges to roam, such as deer, moose, bobcat, black bear and fisher, also benefit.

With the land now protected, Corridor Appalachien and the local municipalities will work to design, build and maintain a trail network that will offer exceptional recreation opportunities for hikers and minimize the disruption to wildlife.



Ducks Unlimited Canada

For 80 years, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) has been working to protect wetlands and surrounding landscapes for waterfowl and many other species that rely on these important lands. Since it began, DUC has conserved, restored and positively influenced 66,166,102 hectares (163.5 million acres) across the country. This is good news for the plants, animals and people who reside near their project sites. DUC's work is becoming increasingly critical. Canada continues to lose wetland habitat at an alarming rate. The country has lost up to 70 per cent of its wetlands in its settled areas. These sloughs, ponds, marshes and bogs play a critical role in maintaining the health of the environment, our economy and our lifestyle.

The NHCP is supporting DUC's efforts to conserve wetlands in Canada. In the first year of the program, DUC received over \$1.9 million in NHCP funds, matching it with over \$3.85 million in funds it raised from individual donors, corporations, foundations and other levels of government. This resulted in 47 projects to conserve 4,529 hectares (11,191 acres) of land.

The NHCP has supported DUC's work with people in rural areas, as that's where most wetlands are — on private land. DUC worked with farmers, ranchers and landowners to provide conservation-friendly agricultural solutions that improve their land and help restore and protect the natural areas found across the country's working landscapes. The Houck conservation agreement is but one example.



Houck conservation agreement

Part of its success in saving wetlands lies in the fact that DUC forges partnerships with many long-time farm families that have a strong conservation ethic.

One such partner is Ron Houck, whose land near Hamiota, Manitoba, was originally bought by his grandfather in 1896. Designated a Heritage Farm, the property includes a former branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway and a grain elevator that operated for most of the 20th century.

The farm's natural history is also impressive. In a region estimated to have lost 70 per cent of its historical wetlands, those on the Houck property remain intact. The property is also home to one of the few known hibernacula for the western plains gartersnake in southwestern Manitoba.

Houck's family has always been conservation-minded, and he wanted to make sure that if he ever parted with his land, its natural areas would be protected from development. He signed a conservation agreement with DUC to protect more than 30 hectares (74 acres) of wetland, grass, shrub and tree habitats.

These habitats not only benefit a wide variety of ducks, such as canvasback, but they host other birds and wildlife species, including great horned owl, songbirds, fox and moose.



Nature Conservancy of Canada | 245 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 410 | Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4P 3J1

Phone: 800-465-8005 | Email: supporter.services@natureconservancy.ca

™ Trademarks owned by The Nature Conservancy of Canada.

PHOTOS: Cover: Adam Cornick. P2: Brent Calver. P4: Brent Calver. P5: Government of Canada; Mike Ford. P6: Adam Cornick. P7: NCC; Cole Lord May. P8: NCC; inset: iStock. P9: Brent Calver; inset: Shutterstock. P10: Jason Leo Bantle; inset: Mhairi McFarlane. P11: NCC; inset: iStock. P14: Charles T. Low; inset: Allum Family. P15: Conservation Manitou; inset: Conservation Manitou. P16: NCC; inset: NCC. P17: Sean Landsman; inset: Sean Landsman. P18: Adam Cornick; inset: Adam Cornick. P19: Dave Menke; inset: Pike Family. P20: ORMLT. P21: ORMLT. P22: Mike Dembeck. P23: DUC; inset: Ron Holmes. **ILLUSTRATIONS:** P17,19: Cory Proulx. All Others: iStock.