



ISLAND
NATURE
TRUST

FEBRUARY 2025
#163

*Dedicated to the Protection of
Natural Areas in Prince Edward
Island Since 1979*

*Sheep laurel flower in the
Portage Bog Natural Area*

Magazine



INT

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Throughout the magazine you will see QR codes accompanying some articles. The codes are a gateway to additional online info & resources.

When you see a code simply open your smartphone camera app, aim at the code and click the pop-up link on your screen. You will then be taken directly to the article or page on your smartphone browser.

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*Send us
a message*



INT



View of Portage River and Portage Bog Natural Area

With a new year comes new energy and the quiet renewal that happens in the midst of winter. It's with a lot of excitement that this issue of our magazine will feature two new and important acquisitions in the Portage Bog. Flip to [page 8](#) where our team has written a great summary on the importance of connectivity in conservation that I think is well worth a read and a share to friends.

I also wanted to extend my gratitude, on behalf of the staff and board, to all who participated in the 'Give a Hoot for Nature' giving campaign. Your generosity has a huge impact and is being put to work right away helping us protect vital habitat for birds across our Island. Speaking of gratitude, this issue of the magazine profiles three incredible supporters: John Sylvester, a talented local photographer who sadly passed away in January, Philips Agri Services, who support Island Nature Trust by donating the proceeds of their annual Wild Bird Food and Feeder Sale, and the MapleCross fund, that supports Canada's natural environment by supporting organizations engaged in land conservation.

Looking forward to the next few months, we can't wait to meet many of you outdoors at our upcoming nature education events. We love to hear your feedback as well, so don't hesitate to reach out with a phone call or email!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Cameron'.

Melissa Cameron
Executive Director
melissa.cameron@islandnaturetrust.ca

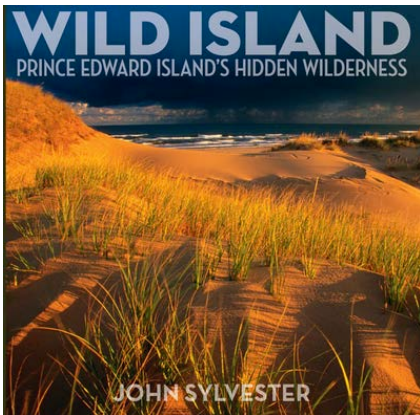


Remembering John Sylvester

The Staff and Board of Island Nature Trust wish to extend their condolences to the family of John Sylvester, a gifted photographer who captured the beauty of our Island's ecosystems. John was an ardent supporter of the Trust and his photographs inspired a connection to the natural heritage of Prince Edward Island to all those who saw them.



Through his lens, John captured the magic of Island landscapes, and his work was published regularly in books, calendars, and magazines. In a press release by Acorn Press in 2009 for his book, *Wild Island: Prince Edward Island's Hidden Wilderness*, was the following paragraph:



"This is not a guidebook to natural areas, but a portrait of the diversity and beauty of what remains. In an attempt to save and protect the "wild things" that are left, the book will inspire readers to explore Prince Edward Island's natural areas for themselves and support the cause of natural areas conservation. To that end, a portion of the royalties are being donated to The Island Nature Trust, a conservation group that for thirty years has worked tirelessly to protect the Island's remaining natural communities."

Thank you, John, for your generosity of spirit, your incredible photographs and your commitment to 'wild things'. Your legacy of images and philanthropy will not be forgotten. We are grateful for your sustained support of Island Nature Trust and we send our condolences to your loved ones.

Did you know that John's photograph of a canola field in Manitoba was featured as one of only thirteen designs to represent Canada's provinces and territories for Canada's 150th anniversary?





Outgoing Board Members

The Staff and Board of Island Nature Trust wishes to extend their sincere thanks and appreciation for the time served by Keila Miller on the board of Island Nature Trust as the representative for the PEI Wildlife Federation. Keila generously shared her deep knowledge of the Island's ecosystems and is an enthusiastic supporter of INT. We wish Keila all the best in her future endeavours!



We would also like to thank Jeanne Maki for her time spent on the INT board as the representative for Nature PEI. Jeanne's quiet nature was a calming presence during board meetings and her passion and commitment to the natural heritage of PEI made her an exceedingly kind and generous board member.

New Board Members

With the departure of these two wonderful volunteers, we welcome two new board members. Barb MacDonald is now the Nature PEI representative for INT and has extensive experience serving on the Trust's Board of Directors, including as a past president.

Barb says: *"I am looking forward to working with Island Nature Trust in the next few years and hope to use my experience to increase nature conservation and public education on the importance of Natural Areas."*



Kelli Miller Kickham joins the INT board as the representative for the PEI Wildlife Federation and succeeds Keila Miller. Kelli is a Project Manager and Bookkeeper for the Souris and Area Branch of the PEI Wildlife Federation. She is the President of the PEI Wildlife Federation and a Director with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, where she serves as the Chair of the Affiliate Committee.

Phillips Agri Services

We are pleased to thank the team at Phillips Agri Services for their sustained commitment to Island Nature Trust. Again this year, they will be donating the proceeds from their annual Winter Wild Bird Food and Feeder Sale to Island Nature Trust.

With a more than 25 year relationship with Island Nature Trust, Phillips Agri Services, under previous and current leadership, has been an impactful sponsor of the Trust, with cumulative donations surpassing well over \$80,000.

We hope to see you out at the retail store located at 18 Exhibition Drive in Charlottetown on February 15th and 22nd between 8am and 12pm when INT staff will be present to answer your most pressing bird questions.

Annual Winter Wild Bird Food & Feeder Sale

The bird food sale runs **February 10th through the 22nd!**
Thanks so much to the team at Phillips Agri Services and Phillips Agromart Group!



The sale this year features **local black oil sunflower seed** grown by Blueshank Farms in Kensington, PE.



M. Salter

Pro Tip

Help keep birds healthy by cleaning your bird feeders regularly with a 10% bleach solution.

Rinse well and dry before re-use.





MapleCross Upland Hardwoods Natural Area

MapleCross Fund

As Island Nature Trust celebrates the goal of acquiring more than 12,000 acres of land on Prince Edward Island, we wanted to highlight one of our most impactful donors who has helped the Trust build upon contiguous areas of conserved land.

Founded by Dr. Isobel Ralston and Dr. Jan Oudenes, the MapleCross fund has a mission to protect and restore Canada’s natural environment by supporting organizations engaged in land conservation.

Among the legally protected properties that MapleCross has helped the Trust acquire are the three phases of the Morell River Riparian Zone Natural Area in Bangor which is situated among a network of over 25 protected properties. The acquisition strategy at the Trust aligns well with the priorities of MapleCross, who prioritize funding land that is ecologically significant, rich in biodiversity and helps to contribute to contiguity.

Cucumber root, hobblebush, pileated woodpecker, and rose-breasted grosbeak are among the rare and uncommon species found at properties acquired with the assistance of MapleCross.



Cucumber Root, ACCDC Ranking of S3S4



Hobblebush, ACCDC Ranking of S1S2





Land Acquisition Highlight:

240 new acres (97 hectares) protected,

Island Nature Trust is thrilled to announce the purchase and protection of 240 acres (97 hectares) of ecologically significant bog, salt marsh, and lowland forest that stretches from the Western Road to the Portage River in Prince County. The acquisition of these two properties adds onto the existing 207-acre Portage Bog and Ivan's Branch Portage Bog Natural Area, now safeguarding a total of 446 acres (180 hectares) of carbon rich peatland forever.

This acquisition is incredibly ecologically rich, with over 85 observations of provincially rare plant and animal species through site visits by INT and the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Center. This includes black ash, Tennessee warbler, cloudberry, and northern mannagrass.



Portage, known in Mi'kmaq as "Unikansuk," or "portage trail," was historically used as a crossing point for the Mi'kmaq people travelling between the Northumberland Strait and the Portage River.



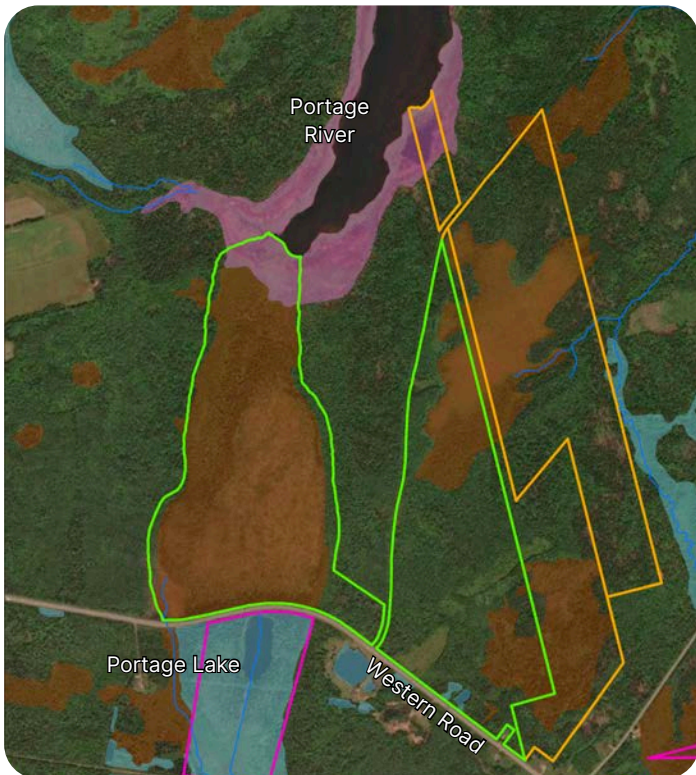
Portage Bog Natural Area now totaling 446 acres



Black ash



Round-leaved
sundew



- Portage Bog Natural Area Expansion
- Existing INT Portage Bog Natural Area
- Other Protected Lands
- Waterways
- Peatland
- Freshwater marsh
- Saltwater marsh

Thanks to support from the Government of Prince Edward Island and the Government of Canada's Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund and Natural Heritage Conservation Program – Land Trusts Conservation Fund, these two properties will be protected forever.

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

Environnement et
Changement climatique Canada



The Importance of Connectivity

Prince Edward Island is a mosaic of small, privately owned parcels, with high road density and a history of deforestation for farmland. These factors have created fragmented habitat for wildlife in the remaining forest and wetlands, which has increased the occurrence and severity of “edge effects”.

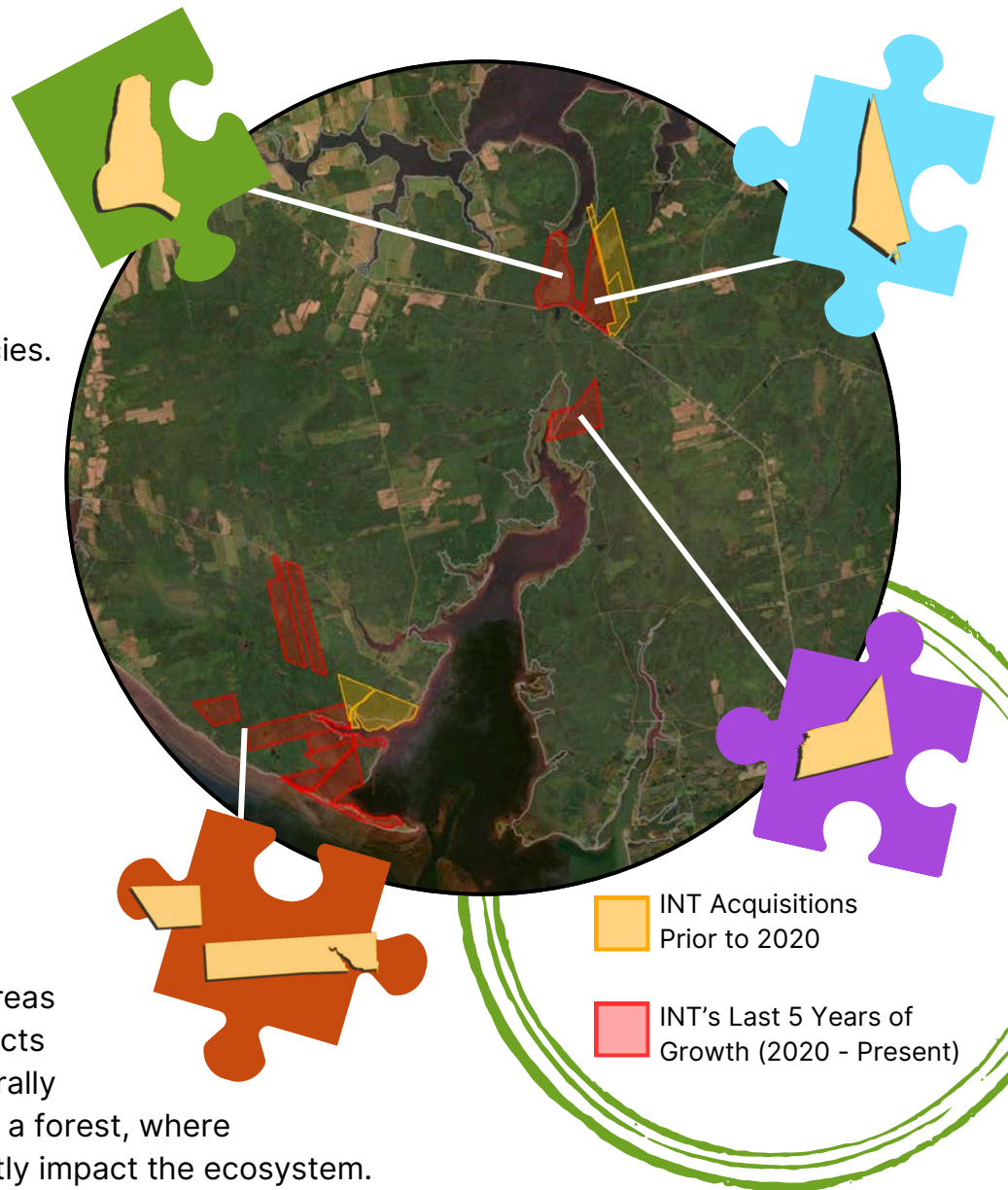
Edge effects occur on the boundary of an ecosystem and can negatively impact wildlife and ecological processes through exposure to outside stressors including wind, temperature variance, water pollution, and noise. These stressors can make wildlife more susceptible to disease, pests, and increased predation, depending on the species.

Extensive habitat fragmentation has also created many “pinch points” across PEI. These are corridors where wildlife is funneled between habitats. Further habitat loss in these regions can reduce species travel significantly.

One of INT’s core goals is to reduce future fragmentation by protecting large, connected areas of wildlife habitat. This also protects “interior forests”, which are generally characterized as 200 meters into a forest, where edge effects no longer significantly impact the ecosystem. Protected interior forests are rare on PEI, and provide critical habitat for species such as the provincially rare eastern hemlock and the federally at-risk olive-sided flycatcher.

Connectivity Highlight

Since 2020, INT has acquired over 1,450 acres within one of Prince County’s largest contiguous forest blocks in Alaska and one of PEI’s most natural prominent pinch points in Portage, shown below.



Corridors of Connectivity 5 Years of Growth

Portage, Prince County
2020 → 2025
208 acres → 446 acres

Farmington, Kings County
2020 → 2025
40 acres → 358 acres

Alaska, Prince County
2020 → 2025
482 acres → 1,236 acres

Morell River, Kings County
2020 → 2025
60 acres → 484 acres

In recent years, INT has made significant strides in acquiring large parcels and building onto existing Natural Areas. These regions are home to ecologically significant features, including interior forests and federally at-risk and provincially rare species. INT also prioritizes protecting land within pinch points, promoting free travel of wildlife within fragmented landscapes.

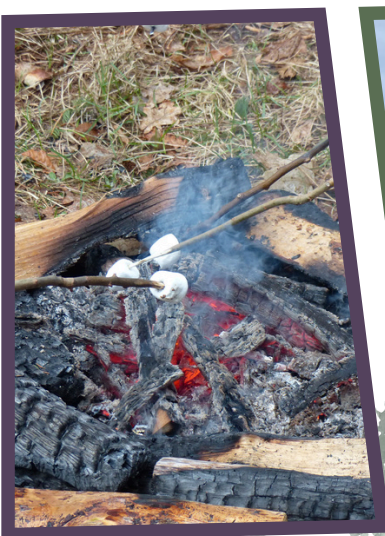
Historic roadway fragmenting the Farmington Woodlands Natural Area in Kings County, PE.

To learn more about donating or selling your land to INT, scan the QR code below.



2024 EVENTS

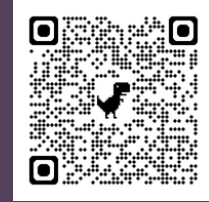
THANKS TO EVERYONE WHO MADE LAST YEAR'S EVENT SERIES A SUCCESS!





Look out for our **2025 EVENTS**

Join our mailing list to be notified about upcoming events!



Children & Family Focused Events

- March:** March Break Kids Day Camp
- May:** Nature Scavenger Hunt
- June:** Learn To Bird
- July:** Coastal Ecology Exploration
- October:** Family Mushroom Hike

Volunteer Events

- April & May:** Guardian Training Sessions
- May - Sep:** Land Stewardship Projects (i.e. invasive species pulls and tree planting)



Public Events

- August:** Walk to St. Peter's Island*
- November:** Nature Trivia Night
- December:** Documentary Viewing

**Must be an INT Member*

Registration will be available on our website one month before events.
Contact engage@islandnaturetrust.ca for more information.

Local Farmers Committed to Bobolink Conservation

The partnership between ALUS and Island Nature Trust has been one that has created a wonderful foundation for farmland bird conservation across Prince Edward Island. Local farmers are proving their commitment to wildlife by providing nesting habitat for multiple grassland species, including bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*), a species at risk. Bobolink were listed as threatened under the Species at Risk Act in 2017, with one of their largest threats on PEI being nest destruction due to the early harvest of hay. By delaying hay harvest and grazing, until after July 15th, local farmers provide bobolink (and other species) the habitat they need to reproduce and increase their chance at successfully fledging their young.

This past 2024 season, we have seen tremendous interest and local support of the program and had 57 landowners across the Island enroll parcels of land into the delayed hay program (both voluntarily and incentivized through ALUS). This equated to over 1,800 acres of farmland being enrolled. Island Nature Trust was able to conduct surveys at each site and over 500 adult bobolink were observed utilizing these fields! On PEI these birds rely on agricultural grasslands to breed and fledge their young, so having this community committed to their conservation is critical for their success.

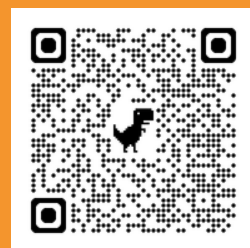
Thanks to everyone for the support this past season. I look forward to what 2025 has in store and hope we can expand our reach and provide more habitat for this charismatic species. I live in rural PEI with my husband and two young children and hearing the bobolink's bubbly call first thing in the morning is certainly a highlight of our spring and summer. I hope through this important work, their call can reach as many people as possible.



Kayle Laverty
Farmland Birds Coordinator

If you would like to know more about bobolink and the delayed hay conservation effort, please reach out to me at landbirds@islandnaturetrust.ca.

To find out more about the **ALUS** programming check them out here!



FARMLAND BIRDS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



Thank you to local farmers for making our successful field season possible!



We will be hosting Farmland Bird information sessions in the coming months! If you are interested in being informed on the place and time, please let us know by scanning here.



Call or email:
landbirds@islandnaturetrust.ca
902-892-7513 (office)

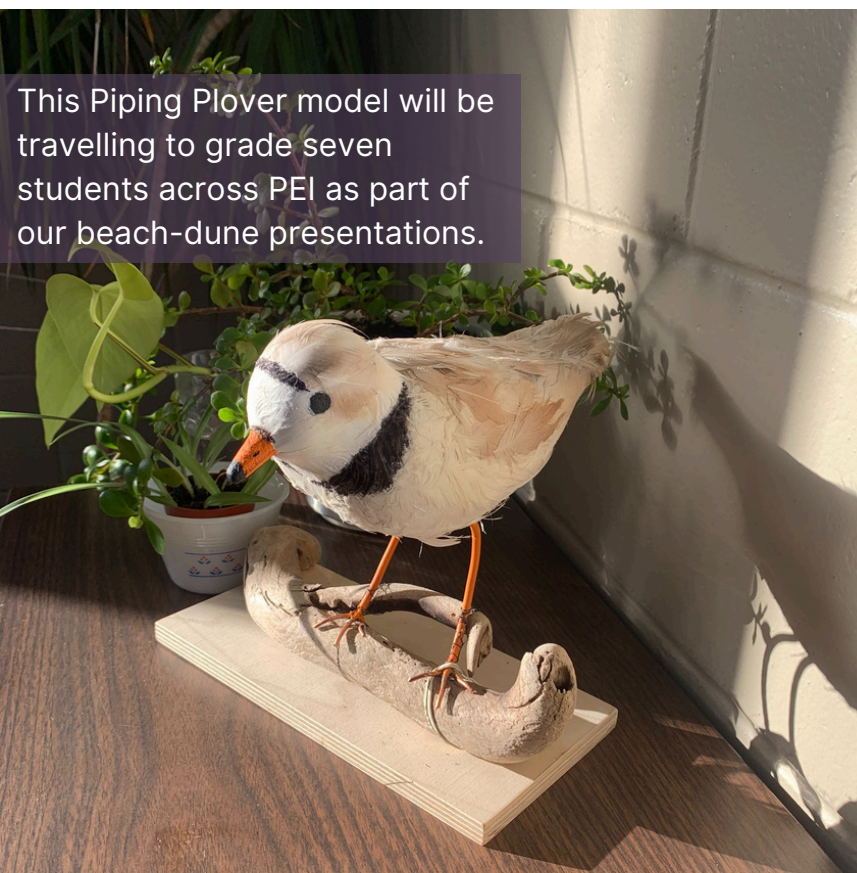
Grade 7 Beach-Dune Ecosystem Curriculum Module

Each year, Island Nature Trust provides field trips and in-class presentations to grade 7 schools across PEI. This program allows us to connect with young Islanders in an interactive way while teaching them about the importance of our coastal ecosystem.

Our beach-dune field trips take place on beaches across PEI and provide a hands-on learning experience while enjoying a fall day at the beach! During the field trips, students take part in a wrack line scavenger hunt, collect invertebrate samples, and create a model to determine how different landscape features influence coastal erosion.

Each class then has a follow-up presentation in the Winter. The presentation allows students to take the concepts they learned in the field into the classroom and provides a more in-depth look at the important forms and functions of PEI's coastal ecosystem. In an effort to appeal to multiple learning styles, the presentations now feature a diorama, species models and pop quiz.

Students raising their hands for trivia during a beach-dune field trip at Lakeside beach this fall.



This Piping Plover model will be travelling to grade seven students across PEI as part of our beach-dune presentations.

This year, we are thankful to be making some upgrades to our beach dune materials! These upgrades include the addition of coastal species models, like the plover pictured on the left, a diorama of the beach dune ecosystem, microscopes, new bins for the erosion model, and a sled to help pull our field trip gear to the beach!

Updates to this project were made possible thanks to the generous support of the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund.



McGowan Natural Area Exclosure Removal

The McGowan Natural Area located in Brudenell, is composed of a **dense canopy of regenerating white spruce**, a common sight across Island forests. This forest type lacks diversity, habitat for wildlife, and, like any monoculture, is more susceptible to disease outbreaks.

In 2018, INT's Stewardship team constructed a **series of patch cuts** (small openings created in the forest) to allow more light to reach the forest floor. In addition, wire fencing, called an exclosure, was installed enclosing these patches to reduce damage to **newly planted saplings** caused by herbivorous animals such as hare.

It is important to consider how best to emulate natural forest processes when implementing forest management techniques. Diversity is the main driver of a **resilient and healthy ecosystem** and is always our goal when managing our Natural Areas.

We are happy to report that this **project was a success!** The exclosures were removed in October, to allow for unimpeded expansion of the established species. The trail system also received a much needed upgrade with significant pruning to create a more visible entry, new trailhead signage, and improved wayfinding markings.

Scan the QR
code to view
the McGowan
trail!



A big thank you to the **Holland College Transitions program** from Montague Regional High School for their hands-on help with trail maintenance and exclosure removal and to the **PEI Active Transportation Fund** for financial aid dedicated to the enhancement of the trail system.





OUR STAFF

Melissa Cameron, Executive Director

Janel Smith, Finance Manager

Simon Andrea, Land Acquisition Manager

Kaylee Busniuk, Stewardship & Engagement Manager

Jenna Cahill, Coastal Project Manager

Kelly Bush, Office Coordinator

Kayle Laverty, Farmland Birds Coordinator

Kate Teed, Coastal Conservation Coordinator

Brittany MacLean, Stewardship Coordinator

Lance Moore, Conservation Coordinator

Cassandra Hennessey, Land Acquisition Coordinator

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Dwaine Oakley, Vice President

Gordon MacKay, Past President

Marie-Ann Bowden, Member-at-large

George W. Mason, Treasurer

Patricia Caporaso, Secretary

David Hooley

Kathy Martin

Barbara J. MacDonald

Andrea McManus

Kelli Miller Kickham

Roger Roy

*"No winter
lasts forever;
no spring
skips its turn."*

- Hal Borland

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Swamp milkweed,
Asclepias incarnata