



ISLAND
NATURE
TRUST

JUNE 2024
#161

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

ISLAND NATURE TRUST



FIRST PUBLIC MEETING

The Island Nature Trust is a recently established group of individuals and organizations concerned about the rapid disappearance of valuable habitats and wildlife resources. Private citizens and public interest groups must become actively involved in preserving and managing the landscape. Everyone is invited to attend our first public meeting.

Date: April 10, 1979

Time: 8:00 p.m.

Location: Farm Centre, University Avenue, Charlottetown

Program:

- Information session on Island Nature Trust
- Slides and films about Island natural areas
- Nature displays and door prizes
- Refreshments

COME AND BRING A FRIEND

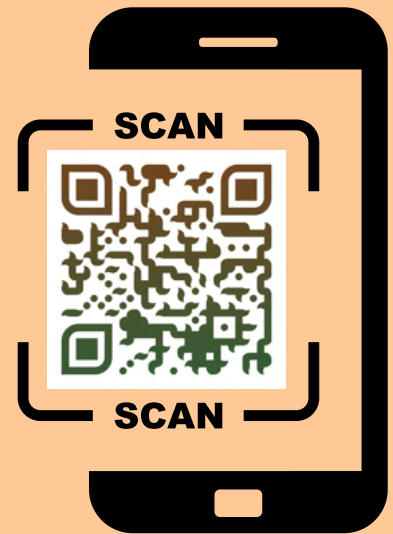
Magazine



INNT

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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



It is with so much joy that Island Nature Trust celebrates our 45th anniversary. Founded by a dedicated group of volunteers in 1979, the Trust has benefitted from the incredible generosity of its volunteers and donors for over four decades.

As I sit at my desk writing this note, it's wonderful to reflect on the vision of the founding members to create a nature trust motivated by a deep concern surrounding the rapid disappearance of valuable habitats and wildlife resources. These bold and decisive early actions that were taken to protect our island ecosystems have created an incredible legacy.

On behalf of the dedicated staff at the Trust and as the newly appointed Executive Director, I invite you, just as our first public meeting notice did, to "come and bring a friend". There is no better time than the present to join us! Come out to a Passport to Nature Event, reach out to learn more about becoming a volunteer or simply take a stroll in one of our natural areas. Celebrate with us as we honor the milestones we have achieved and as we continue to protect and promote biodiversity on PEI.

Melissa Cameron
Executive Director
melissa.cameron@islandnaturetrust.ca

Celebrating 45 Years of Island Nature Trust: A Legacy of Conservation

This year marks a significant milestone for Island Nature Trust (INT) as we celebrate 45 years of dedication to protecting the natural beauty of Prince Edward Island (PEI). The front cover proudly features a poster advertising the first public meeting of INT held in April 1979, reminding us of our humble beginnings and the journey we have undertaken. Since that pivotal meeting, our mission has been to protect the Island's unique and diverse ecosystems. Today, we are proud to announce that we have successfully acquired 11,538 acres of land, safeguarding over 110 natural areas across PEI.

The Beginnings of Island Nature Trust

The Island Nature Trust was founded in 1979 as a private land trust to protect and conserve natural areas in PEI. Concerned about the loss of natural habitats and ecosystems, a group of dedicated individuals and organizations, including the PEI Wildlife Federation and the Natural History Society of PEI (Nature PEI), came together to establish INT. The trust's initial focus was on acquiring and protecting ecologically sensitive lands through donation, bequest, or purchase.

Over the years, INT has expanded its efforts to include managing and restoring its properties, assisting private landowners with conservation initiatives, and delivering and promoting environmental education. Our journey began with a commitment to protecting the natural landscapes of PEI, and it continues to inspire our work today.



Highlights from Our 45th Year

As we reflect on our journey, it's heartening to see the tangible impact of our efforts. From old-growth forests and riparian wetlands to vital wildlife habitats, each parcel of land we protect is a testament to the collective commitment of our supporters, donors, and volunteers, from old-growth forests and riparian zones to wetlands and coastlines, we protect vital wildlife habitat. In this commemorative year, we highlight some of the significant acquisitions made, underscoring the importance of continued conservation work.



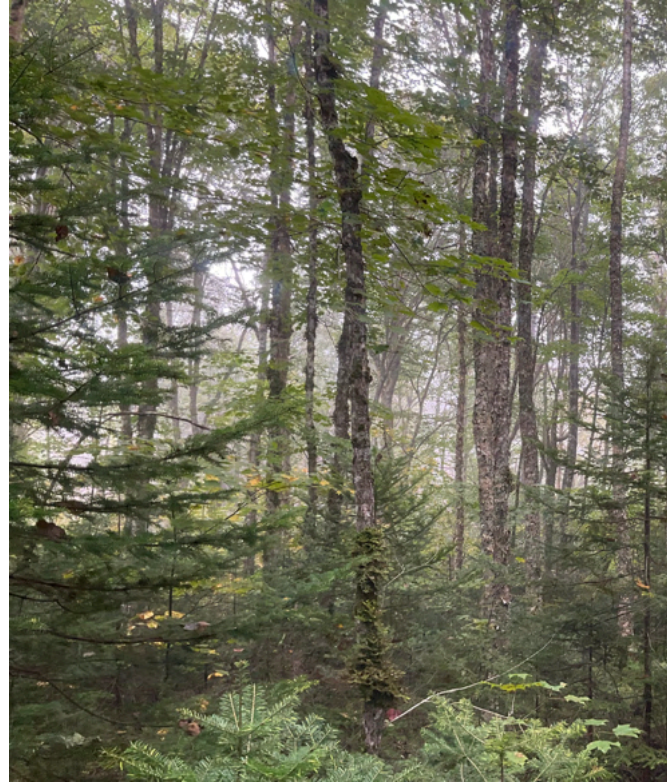
Owls' Haven: The Bowden Kusters Natural Area

One of our most notable acquisitions this year is the 100-acre Bowden Kusters Natural Area in Alaska, PEI, fondly named Owls' Haven. This area, rich in biodiversity, features mature hardwood stands and an upland eastern white cedar forest. The canopy includes sugar maple, red maple, yellow birch, red spruce, and the rare American beech, white elm, white ash, and black ash. The forest's lush understory is home to wildflowers, ferns, and shrubs like the uncommon showy lady's slipper, swamp red currant, alder-leaved buckthorn, and cucumber root.

The Bowden Kusters Natural Area provides critical habitat for several at-risk species, including the Canada warbler, eastern wood pewee, little brown bat, and northern long-eared bat. This property was acquired through a generous donation from Marie-Ann Bowden, in loving memory of her late husband. During a visit, Marie-Ann and INT staff were delighted to observe a barred owl roosting in a tree, inspiring the name Owls' Haven.

Brookvale Hardwoods Natural Area

Another significant addition is the 30-acre Brookvale Hardwoods Natural Area. Situated along the West River in Appin Road, Central PEI, this area protects a mature Wabanaki forest. Despite its history as a homestead, the riparian forest has remained undisturbed for over a century, providing a sanctuary for numerous species. The forest canopy consists of sugar maple, yellow birch, American beech, and red maple, with an understory of mountain ash, balsam fir, and beaked hazelnut. This property was secured with funding from the Province of Prince Edward Island.



New Perth Natural Area

The New Perth Natural Area is another impactful acquisition. This 41-acre property, located north of Montague, PEI, encompasses riparian forest and freshwater marsh on the Brudenell River. It serves as a crucial waterway between Martins Pond and MacNeills Pond where brook trout thrive. The property boasts towering white pines and eastern hemlocks, alongside red maple, American beech, and white birch. Funding from the Province of Prince Edward Island made this acquisition possible, further enhancing our network of protected areas.

Farmington Woodlands Natural Area

We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to George Mason for his generous partial donation of 58.5 acres of forest in Farmington. This contribution adds to our growing list of protected natural areas and underscores the vital role of community support in our conservation efforts. Read an interview with George and his donation of land in the following pages of this magazine.



Looking Ahead

As we celebrate this 45th anniversary, we are reminded of the importance of our mission and the incredible journey that has brought us here. Island Nature Trust remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting PEI's natural heritage for future generations. We invite you to join us in celebrating our achievements and continuing the crucial work of conservation.

Together, we can ensure that the natural beauty of Prince Edward Island endures for another 45 years and beyond.



Profile: Farmington Woodlands Natural Area (Klondike Road Branch)

The Farmington Woodlands Natural Area, enriched by the recent addition of a 58.5-acre partial donated by George W. and Maureen Mason, is a vibrant natural space located in Kings County, Prince Edward Island. This newly acquired land enhances the already significant 374-acre Natural Area by further protecting the region and its waterways. The property showcases a diverse mix of forests dominated by balsam fir, red maple, red pine, white pine, larch, and cedar, creating a haven for a variety of flora and fauna.

Ecological Significance: The area supports a rich mix of forest and riparian ecosystems, including several provincially rare tree species like eastern white cedar and American beech. A waterway in the eastern section feeds into the Fortune and Naufrage Rivers, connecting to a significant wetland complex managed by Ducks Unlimited Canada. This area is crucial for maintaining the ecological integrity of the Fortune River complex and serves as a habitat for diverse plant and animal species.

Historical Context: Historically used for agriculture and forestry, the Farmington Woodlands Natural Area has been managed by Island Nature Trust (INT) to conserve its natural state. It features mature riparian forests and a freshwater marsh with alders, yellow marsh marigold, and other hydrophytic vegetation.



The new addition enhances the connectivity of INT and provincial protected areas, creating larger contiguous habitats benefiting wildlife and plant species.

Accessibility: The property is accessible via PEI Route 2 to the west and Klondike Road, a seasonal dirt road running along the northern and southern boundaries. Visitors are welcome to explore the area at their own risk, though they are advised to adhere to the guidelines prohibiting campfires and overnight camping to protect the natural environment.

If you are interesting in becoming a Guardian for this property contact Kaylee at land@islandnaturetrust.ca



Donor Profile: George Mason

George Mason, who donated this land as a split receipt in March 2024, has a strong commitment to conservation. Serving as INT's Treasurer since 2021, he has also volunteered with organizations such as the Canadian Wildlife Federation and the World Wildlife Fund.

Born and raised in Toronto, George initially pursued a career in resource and wildlife management, majoring in forestry. George's ties to the Island began during his academic pursuits and continued through his professional endeavors after moving to PEI in the early 80's. His passion for the environment, however, remained constant even as his professional path led him to business and finance.

George's lifelong interest in conservation began in his youth, nurtured by summers spent at a cottage on Georgian Bay in Ontario. His experiences with outdoor activities like boating, sailing, backpacking, and cross-country skiing deeply influenced his commitment to protecting natural landscapes.

"Outdoor recreation was always a part of my life," George reminisced. "From a young age, I was drawn to conservation areas, which led me to study forestry. Although my career took a different direction, my interest in conservation never waned."

A Meaningful Donation

George's donation to Island Nature Trust was driven by his commitment to conservation. The land, which George has witnessed naturally rewild over the years, holds a rich history of agricultural use and subsequent reclamation by nature.

"After my son moved to Ontario, I realized he wouldn't be returning to manage the land. Rather than selling it, I wanted to ensure it remained accessible and protected," George said. "Donating to the Island Nature Trust seemed the best way to achieve this."

The split receipt process, facilitated through Environment and Climate Change Canada's Ecological Gifts Program, allowed him to sell the land at cost and donate the remainder, offering significant tax benefits.

"The split receipt process made the donation financially feasible," George noted. "It's a great way for landowners to contribute to conservation without sacrificing financial stability."

Inspiring Future Conservation Efforts:

George's actions highlight the benefits of conserving natural lands over private sale, demonstrating the value of ecological gifts for both the environment and the community.

"I hope others will see the value in preserving natural spaces," George said. "The Ecological Gift program makes it attractive for landowners interested in conservation, providing a viable alternative to private sales."

A Legacy of Stewardship

George Mason's donation is a testament to his commitment to protecting nature. By protecting this land, he leaves a legacy that inspires other landowners to consider the long-term benefits of conservation.

"As I get older, I realize the importance of leaving behind a legacy that reflects my values. This donation is my way of contributing to a sustainable future, ensuring that these natural spaces remain protected and cherished."

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 Ecological Gifts Program is a Canadian government initiative designed to encourage landowners to protect and conserve Canada's natural heritage. This program provides significant tax benefits to those who donate ecologically sensitive land.

Scan or [click](#) to learn more about the Ecological Gifts Program.



Understanding a Split Receipt Donation with George Mason:

"Let's assume your property cost \$20,000 and is appraised at \$60,000. If you were to sell it on the open market, after accounting for capital gains tax, real estate fees, and legal fees, you might put \$49,000 in your pocket if you get the appraised value.

If you opt for a split receipt for cash of \$20,000, that amount is offset by your cost and remains tax-free. If the property qualifies as an Ecological Gift, it is exempt from capital gains tax, and you receive a charitable receipt for the \$40,000 donation. This could give you an \$18,000 tax savings for a total of \$38,000 in your pocket.

To go one step further, you could donate the entire property. In this example, you might pocket \$27,000 in tax savings. Your gift becomes a property that is protected as a Natural Area for you and the public to enjoy for generations." - *George Mason*



2023 Bank Swallow Review

Bank swallow (*Riparia riparia*) are a threatened bird species that nest in colonies along PEI's coastline. These incredible little birds use their beaks, wings and feet to dig burrows in sandstone cliffs and dunes in which to make their nests. All swallows belong to a group known as aerial insectivores, meaning they forage for insects during flight. As members of this group, Bank Swallow are masterful aviators and can often be seen flittering through the air in a chaotic dance as they chase down flying insects.

Like many aerial insectivores, Bank Swallow have experienced a significant population decline of 98% over the last four decades. The exact cause of their decline is unknown but is likely due to several contributing factors. Among these factors, reduction of insect prey due to the destruction of insect-producing habitats like wetlands and

loss of nesting habitat due to coastal armoured are likely drivers of this decline. For these reasons, Bank Swallow were listed as a threatened species under the Species at Risk Act (SARA) in 2017.

Island Nature Trust has been surveying for Bank Swallow intermittently since 2013. Ten years later, 2023 marked the beginning of a more standardized process of surveying for Bank Swallow in the region. In partnership with the Atlantic Canada Bank Swallow Working Group, Island Nature Trust launched a new survey protocol for monitoring this species. The new protocol aims to identify Bank Swallow colonies and potential nesting habitat by establishing survey routes all along PEI's coastline. Routes range between 0.5km-10km and are surveyed for potential threats to Bank Swallow, suitable nesting habitat, and active Bank Swallow colonies.

Together with nine partner watershed groups and fifteen volunteers, Island Nature Trust surveyed 526km of PEI's coastline and identified 163 active Bank Swallow colonies in 2023.

This was a phenomenal step towards the goal of surveying the entire coastline of PEI for Bank Swallow. As we are kicking off the 2024 field season, we have high hopes that the areas which were not surveyed in 2023 will be covered this year, thus completing a full census of the Island and contributing to our knowledge of this charming species.

Island Nature Trust would like to thank our many exceptional volunteers, partner groups, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund for making this work possible.



Protecting Piping Plovers in PEI

The piping plover (*Charadrius melodus melodus*) is a small, sand-colored shorebird that makes its home on the Atlantic Coast beaches, from Newfoundland and Labrador down to North Carolina. These remarkable birds are well camouflaged against the shifting sands of Prince Edward Island (PEI), where they nest and raise their young each year. However, their survival depends on having safe, healthy beach habitats for breeding, resting, and feeding—a resource that is increasingly under threat.

THE PLIGHT OF THE PIPING PLOVER

Piping plovers have been listed as Endangered under the federal Species-At-Risk Act since 2003. On PEI, fewer than 25 breeding pairs remain most years. These birds face numerous challenges including:



HUMAN DISTURBANCE

Human activities on beaches pose a significant risk to plovers. These birds, their eggs, and chicks are hard to see, making it easy for beachgoers to get too close without realizing it. Increased human presence can lead to nest detection by predators, egg abandonment, chick mortality, and even the complete abandonment of traditional breeding sites.

Simple measures such as staying clear of signed nesting areas, keeping motorized vehicles off beaches, leashing pets, and walking on the wet sand can minimize disturbances and protect these vulnerable birds.



PREDATOR PRESSURES

Plover adults, chicks, and eggs are susceptible to predation from crows, falcons, eagles, raccoons, foxes, mink, coyotes, and roaming pets. Predators are often attracted to the beach by leftover food and waste.

Encouraging beachgoers to take their trash with them can help reduce predator visits. Additionally, adult plovers give alarm calls when people or pets get too close, which can attract predators. Listening for these signals is crucial to avoid drawing unwanted attention to nests.

WEATHER CHALLENGES

High tides and strong winds can flood nests or endanger flightless chicks. With climate change increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, the threats to plover breeding success and survival during migration and winter are growing.



Island Nature Trust's Piping Plover Conservation Program

Island Nature Trust (INT) has been at the forefront of piping plover conservation on PEI since 1995, coordinating efforts with dedicated volunteers, the Canadian Wildlife Service, Parks Canada, and the Province. INT staff and volunteers monitor and protect plover nests on PEI's provincial beaches, from Jacques Cartier Provincial Park near Alberton to East Point past Souris, and along the east coast to Wood Islands.

Each year, INT staff and volunteers install symbolic fencing around nesting areas to signal their presence and protect them from disturbances. The fencing, consisting of posts with ropes, helps ensure that people stay out of the nesting areas and give the birds the space they need to thrive. When chicks hatch, they begin foraging almost immediately, making it crucial for beachgoers to be aware and share the shore.

CELEBRATING CONSERVATION SUCCESSES

In June this year, INT staff and volunteers completed the annual piping plover index count, covering over 117 kilometers of suitable habitat across 58 beaches. Coastal Conservation Coordinator Sarah Hirtle worked with Coastal Conservation Coordinator Jenna Cahill and Coastal Conservation Technicians Kate, Abby, and Hannah to survey beaches across the Island. They dedicated countless hours, showcasing their passion and commitment despite sometimes challenging conditions.

The census revealed several triumphs: the first nest in the Canavoy area since 2015, nests near Basin Head after no nesting last year, and early June chicks hatching on the Sandhills. These successes are a testament to the dedication and hard work of everyone involved in the piping plover conservation program.



Coastal Conservation Coordinator Sarah Hirtle (3rd from left) with L-R: Coastal Conservation Technicians, Hannah, Kate and Abby

JOIN THE EFFORT

Island Nature Trust's work to protect piping plovers is vital to ensuring their survival on PEI. By respecting nesting areas, reducing human disturbance, managing waste, and listening for plover signals, we can all contribute to safeguarding these beautiful, endangered birds. Together, we can help ensure that PEI's beaches remain a sanctuary for piping plovers for generations to come.

For more information on how to support piping plover conservation efforts, visit Island Nature Trust's website at www.islandnaturetrust.ca.

Land Stewardship
Team

Field Photos



The Spring Park and Cornwall Girl Guide Units assisted with tree planting at the Helen and Stan Buell Pines Natural Area.



Trail cameras were installed on some of our Natural Areas to better understand the wildlife community composition. This was made possible by the support of the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund.



New interpretive signs were installed in four Natural Areas (Buote Heritage Woods, Hansen-MacIsaac, Kildare Forest, and Jenkins Complex).



A boardwalk was installed at the Kildare Forest Natural Area to reduce trail degradation in wet areas. This was made possible by the PEI Active Transportation Fund.





A group of volunteers from Sekisui Diagnostics assisting with a dumpsite clean up at MapleCross – Morell River Riparian Zone Natural Area. They removed 190 kgs of illegally dumped waste!



New tree swallow boxes donated to INT from a member of the community were installed at Connick Woodland Natural Area



INT and the PEI Invasive Species Council teamed up to remove a patch of Scotch Broom from Hennessey Farm Woodland Natural Area



On-the-Job Training (OJT) Student Spotlight



Chris Johnson

I am a 22-year-old student at Holland College enrolled in the Wildlife Conservation Technology program. My passion for wildlife conservation, especially birds, has been a driving force in my life since I began birding at the age of 10. My love for birds and their critical habitats has taken me from The Bahamas to Canada, fueling my dedication to conservation efforts.

"Our time during OJT at Island Nature Trust has been immensely useful and valuable to us. We have learned and practiced many things within the Wildlife Conservation Technology program at Holland College." - Chris and Andrew

Andrew Beaumier

I am a 19-year-old student at Holland College, also in the Wildlife Conservation Technology program. From a young age, I've been fascinated by nature and wildlife, which has led me to pursue this field. I enjoy various forms of outdoor recreation, including hiking, camping, bird watching, and hunting. I'm passionate about learning as much as I can about nature and its diverse wildlife.





Experience at Island Nature Trust

During our time at INT, we had the opportunity to work with both the Land Stewardship and Species-at-Risk Teams.

Land Stewardship

We engaged in tasks such as installing natural area signage across all three counties, conducting site visits, and performing bioinventories in natural areas. Through these activities, we explored a variety of PEI's habitats, including beaches, dunes, salt marshes, bogs, grasslands, and forests. One of our favorite sites was the Long River Riparian Zone Natural Area, donated to INT in 2014 by the Schaefer family and protected under the Natural Areas Protection Act (NAPA). Here, we installed signage and monitored the effectiveness of previous efforts to remove invasive glossy buckthorn. This location, previously used for agriculture and silviculture, is transitioning into an early successional mixed forest, featuring coniferous forest, grassland edges, riparian zones, and a small stand of older aged deciduous forest.

Species-at-Risk

We also conducted species-at-risk (SAR) surveys, focusing on the piping plover. Our primary survey locations were Cabot Beach Provincial Park and the neighboring beach in Darnley. Given the annual dredging of the Malpeque Harbour, it is crucial to monitor species-at-risk to prevent disturbances that could affect their breeding season. Although we did not observe any piping plovers, we documented a diverse array of wildlife, including gulls, red-breasted mergansers, northern harriers, song sparrows, and great blue herons.

Pictures by Chris Johnson

Left: A dune at Basin Head

Right: A northern harrier

Insights and Reflections

Without our own vehicles, our placement at INT provided us with unique opportunities to explore the island's natural beauty. The fieldwork allowed us to see parts of PEI that we might not have otherwise experienced.

Working with INT has given us valuable insights into the conservation of plants and wildlife across the province. Beyond restoring and conserving natural areas, INT is actively involved in community outreach about species-at-risk, removing invasive species, and planting native species.

Our OJT experience at INT has exceeded our expectations. We have gained immense respect and inspiration for the work being done by INT's small but dedicated team. We are confident that the lands protected and stewarded by INT are in the best hands.



PASSPORT TO NATURE 2024

Upcoming EVENTS

July

Orchid Walk and Talk

Kate MacQuarrie will be leading us on a walk in beautiful Ellerslie to find and learn about orchids!

August

Walk to St. Peter's Island (INT Members Only)

Join us for our annual walk across the tidal flats to St. Peter's Island.

September

Photography in Nature

Join us as Beth Hoar guides us on a walk to share some tricks and tips for capturing nature's beauty behind the lense.

October

Mushroom Walk and Talk

TBC with registration and details to come.

November

Trivia Night for Nature Nerds

Come join the INT community for our 3rd annual night of Nature Trivia!

Click or scan here
to register for our
Passport to Nature
events:



INVEST IN NATURE

Invest in Nature is a pathway to support Island Nature Trust for those who are passionate about protecting the natural beauty of Prince Edward Island and securing a sustainable future through financial contributions and land donations. Discover the direct and immediate ways you can invest in the Island's ecological health and support the mission of Island Nature Trust.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO INVEST IN NATURE?

Being an investor in nature means directly contributing to the protection and conservation of Prince Edward Island's natural landscapes. Your support not only strengthens the roots of our conservation efforts but also ensures the long-term sustainability of our Island's biodiversity.

Want to chat about investing in nature?

Contact our Executive Director, Melissa Cameron at melissa.cameron@islandnaturetrust.ca or call (902) 892-7513.



**SCAN
OR
CLICK**



FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Cash contributions are the lifeblood for Island Nature Trust's work, acquiring natural land for protection, stewarding ecosystems, and promoting education.

Scan or click to learn how your financial support can help sustain the Wabanaki-Acadian forests in PEI.



LAND DONATIONS: PERPETUAL PROTECTION

Consider donating your ecologically significant land to Island Nature Trust. This act goes beyond mere charity; it becomes a lasting legacy for nature conservation.

By gifting your land, you ensure that it remains undeveloped and protected forever.



SEED TREE SPONSORSHIP: CULTIVATING BIODIVERSITY

The Seed Tree Initiative offers a unique way to contribute to land stewardship and conservation. By sponsoring a seed tree, individuals or businesses actively participate in the restoration and well-being of our Island's ecosystems.



LEGACY GIVING: ENSURING A LASTING IMPACT

Legacy giving is a pathway to provide enduring support for Island Nature Trust's mission. By including the Trust in your will or estate plan, you create a legacy of nature conservation. Your commitment will benefit the environment and the Island's biodiversity for years to come.