



ISLAND
NATURE
TRUST

QUARTERLY

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Table of Contents

<u>Message From Our Executive Director</u>	02
<u>Protecting the Eastern Kings Hardwoods</u>	05
<u>Fired Up for Conservation</u>	07
<u>Advocating for Nature</u>	08
<u>Foundational Support</u>	09
<u>Lives Well Lived</u>	10
<u>Evening with Suzanne Simard</u>	11
<u>Recent Events</u>	12
<u>Family Fishing Day</u>	13
<u>Conservation Guardians</u>	14
<u>Stewardship Update</u>	15
<u>Piping Plover Update</u>	16

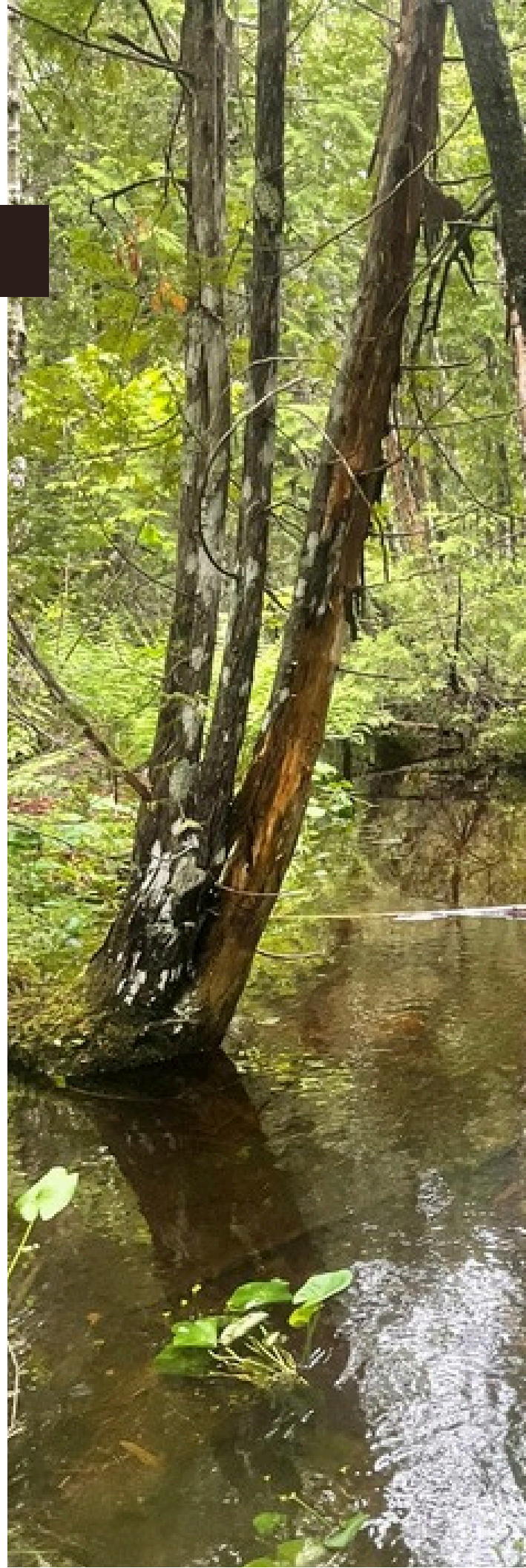
Island Nature Trust

P.O. Box 265, Charlottetown PE, C1A 7K4

(902) 892-7513

www.islandnaturetrust.ca

Cover Photo: Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*)





Greetings,

Dear Reader,

I invite you to dive into this new quarterly edition of Island Nature Trust's newsletter, where you'll find inspiring storytelling from our staff and learn about the generosity of Islanders.

It's within the context of these positive articles that I want to share some thoughts on a Discussion Paper entitled 'Getting Major Projects Built in Canada' that was released on May 12th.

What Ottawa's "Nation-Building" Means for PEI's Beaches, Bats, and Wetlands

Ottawa's newly released discussion paper, Getting Major Projects Built in Canada, frames itself as a sensible modernization. Efficiency. Predictability. Nation-building in a competitive global moment. These are not unreasonable goals. No one on Prince Edward Island wants federal processes to be needlessly slow. But when you read the actual proposals carefully, a different picture emerges, one that should concern every Islander who cares about what this Island looks like in thirty years.

What the Discussion Paper Proposes

The paper contains six reform proposals. Some are administrative improvements: compressing federal review into a one-year window, creating a single Crown consultation hub, streamlining project decision documents. Faster, better-coordinated processes could, in principle, benefit communities and proponents alike.

The more consequential proposals are further in. Proposal 5 would create Federal Economic Zones, defined corridors for transportation, energy, and industry, where Cabinet could pre-approve whole categories of development without project-by-project environmental review. Proposal 6 includes the power for Cabinet to exempt specific projects from the jeopardy test under the Species at Risk Act, the legal provision that prohibits activities likely to harm or kill listed species at risk, if deemed "in the public interest." That exemption is not buried in technical language. It is there, plainly, as item 6(viii).

These are not administrative refinements. They are structural changes to who decides, and on what basis.

What This Means for Prince Edward Island

PEI is not the kind of province that hosts oil sands or nuclear facilities. We are unlikely to be the site of the mega-projects this discussion paper was primarily written for. But the erosion of federal environmental standards does not stay contained to one geography. Species do not respect jurisdictional lines. Wetland connectivity matters across the Northumberland Strait. And the precedents set in how Canada treats its environmental obligations ripple everywhere. The piping plover, that small, timid shorebird whose nesting territories stretch across our beaches, is already navigating one of the most precarious coastlines in its range. A federal framework that makes it easier to override species at risk protections for projects deemed to be in the public interest does not protect that bird. It gives Cabinet the discretion to decide whether it is worth protecting at all.

The Gulf of St. Lawrence Aster, a rare coastal plant clinging to our coasts, is threatened by habitat loss and sea level rise that climate change is accelerating. The same climate commitments this government has made internationally are undermined when the domestic regulatory architecture that holds projects to environmental account is quietly dismantled.

Our wetlands and estuaries, already under pressure from coastal erosion, agriculture, and development, are exactly the kind of habitat that environmental assessments are designed to protect cumulatively. Economic zones that pre-approve development across defined corridors without site-by-site review produce the opposite of science-based management.

What the Discussion Paper Gets Right, and Where It Falls Short

It would be unfair to pretend the paper contains no legitimate ideas. The government is correct that consultation processes have sometimes been fragmented and hard for Indigenous communities to navigate. A single, well-resourced Crown Consultation Hub, properly implemented, could genuinely improve outcomes for First Nations and Métis peoples, including Mi'kmaq communities here in the Maritimes, if it results in earlier and more substantive engagement rather than a condensed formality. The paper says the right things about the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Whether those words survive the legislative drafting is the real test. But good intentions on consultation do not offset what is being proposed on the environmental protection side. Faster reviews without adequate scientific rigour are not modern environmental assessment; they are the absence of it.



And giving Cabinet the authority to exempt projects from species-at-risk jeopardy tests is not streamlining. It is removing the floor beneath which projects cannot go. Canada has signed international climate agreements. It has committed to biodiversity frameworks that require protecting, not further endangering, species at risk. Proposal 6(viii) puts that commitment directly in question.

A Different Kind of Nation-Building

Prince Edward Island knows something about the long view. This Island's residents watch the red cliffs erode a little more each year. Our fishers know what happens when ecosystems are managed for short-term extraction. Our tourism economy depends entirely on people believing that PEI's beaches, countryside, and coastal waters are genuinely, exceptionally beautiful and alive.

That is not a romantic sentiment. It is an economic argument. And it is an argument for stronger environmental process, not weaker.

If the federal government wants to genuinely modernize environmental assessment, the path is not to pre-approve projects before review is complete, exempt endangered species from legal protection when convenient, or give Cabinet the authority to define which ecological corridors can be industrialized.

The path is better-resourced agencies, earlier and more meaningful Indigenous consultation, rigorous but time-limited scientific review, and a clear-eyed commitment to the obligations Canada has already made.

What is being proposed is something different. It is the substitution of political discretion for scientific accountability. It is the weakening of the framework that protects what, once gone, cannot be recovered.

Islanders have experienced this kind of thinking. We've seen erosion in action. We know how fast it goes once it starts.

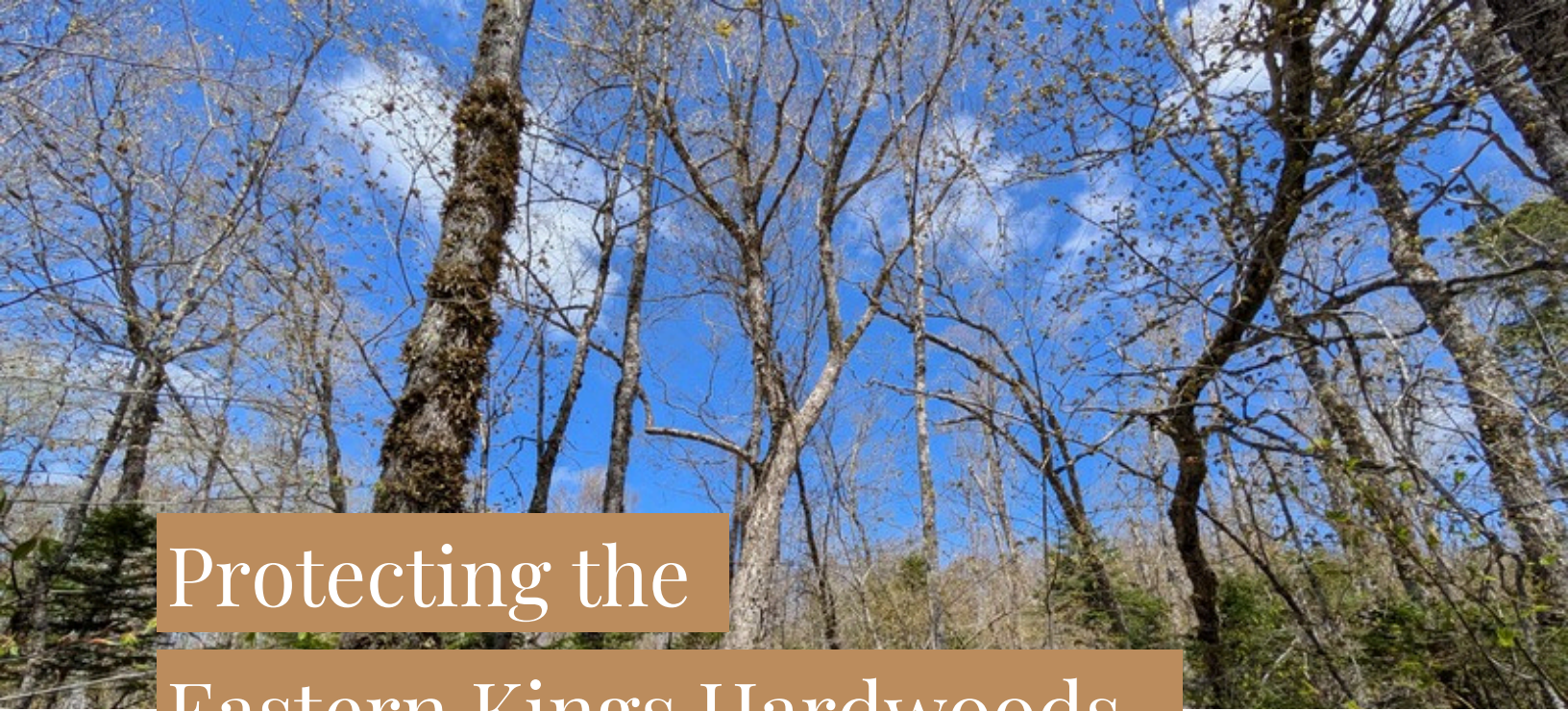
Once a piping plover nesting pair is gone from one of our beaches, no Cabinet decision can bring it back.

Submissions on the federal discussion paper are open and have been extended until July 22. Islanders are encouraged to engage directly at canada.ca and to contact their Member of Parliament and the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Nature.



Melissa Cameron
Executive Director





Protecting the Eastern Kings Hardwoods

In February of 2026, we put out a call for support to acquire a large forested property and protect it in perpetuity. Not only did we reach our \$100,000 goal, we surpassed it.

We could not have protected this land without the support of our generous donors and supporters.

The MapleCross - Eastern Kings Hardwoods Natural Area protects 219 acres of tolerant upland hardwood forest within the largest contiguous block of this forest-type on the Island.

The property has been managed as a woodlot for at least the past 20 years, with some areas of timber harvest. There are scattered large trees and the back 30 percent of the property which have not been cut.

Provincially rare species on the property include dwarf ginseng, American beech, silvery glade fern, and the federally at-risk Canada warbler, eastern wood-pewee, and an ancestral strain of Atlantic salmon found in the Cross River.



The campaign success was highlighted on the front page of The Guardian in April.

What's Next?
Due to the success of the campaign, Island Nature Trust is able to purchase an additional 75 acre property nearby!



176
Campaign donors

Painted trillium (*Trillium undulatum*)

294
Acres protected



10 Rare species observed

Dwarf ginseng (*Panax trifolius*)



2 Kilometres of the Cross River riparian zone conserved



>14,000 People engaged on social media

3 Confirmed species at risk protected

Canada warbler (*Cardellina canadensis*)



Fired Up for Conservation



Within hours of sending out our Eastern Kings Hardwoods Campaign email, Emily Browning, a local potter, had posted a fundraiser to help us secure the land. We had not even had the chance to post on our own social media!

Emily took commissions for customizable bird themed mugs, with all proceeds generously going to the campaign. In total, 45 mugs were sold and over \$2,600 was donated. We are immensely grateful that Emily took this on, even if she was not expecting to make so many mugs!

Keep an eye on her social media for a similar fundraiser to support the Humane Society in the fall!



Emily at the Alley Street Clay Club Sale in May of 2026.



See more of Emily's work on her Instagram!



Advocating for Nature

When singer-songwriter Molly Whuppie is not writing and performing nostalgic children's songs, she is advocating for her community and nature.

Molly is an active volunteer with INT, monitoring the 300-acre MapleCross - Port Hill Station Natural Area just outside of Tyne Valley as a Conservation Guardian. Being one of our largest Natural Areas, this is no small feat!

When she read the news of wetlands being destroyed for a golf course in Summerside, she wanted to do more and use her online voice to advocate for the protection of PEI's at risk ecosystems.



"This is a really small island, and we need to be really proactive about protecting our forests"

- Molly Whuppie

See more of Molly here:



We never expected a campaign from Canada's smallest province to receive worldwide attention - that is, until Molly Whuppie shared our ask with her 1.5 million followers. Instantly, we started to receive an influx of donations - some from people who have never been to PEI. Over 55 donations from three countries were made because of Molly's posts on TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram.



Island Nature Trust staff members celebrating the acquisition at the property in May of 2026.

Grassroots support from artists and creators like Emily Browning and Molly Whuppie are an incredible sponsorship to the work we do. If you want to use your voice to advocate for nature, reach out or scan the QR code below!

Want to help advocate for nature?



Foundational Support

MapleCross

The MapleCross - Eastern Kings Hardwoods Natural Area is the thirteenth Island Nature Trust property funded primarily by MapleCross. Founded by Dr. Jan Oudenes and Dr. Isobel Ralston, MapleCross is a fund committed to protecting the wildest parts of Canada. They have significantly supported INT since 2020 and are often the reason acquisitions like these are possible.

MapleCross was generous to provide the initial funding for the purchase of the Eastern Kings Hardwoods. This enabled us to amplify campaign donations.

In September of 2025, INT staff Melissa and Simon were delighted to show Dr. Oudenes and Dr. Ralston the MapleCross - DeRoche Pond Natural Area and the MapleCross - Morell River Natural Area. Each property is named for their significant donations to the securement of the land.



Dr. Ralston and Dr. Oudenes at the MapleCross - DeRoche Pond Natural Area in September, 2025



ECHO Foundation

The ECHO Foundation has generously supported Island Nature Trust's land securement efforts for several projects. Founded in 1983, the foundation focuses on supporting mental health and environmental initiatives.

We are appreciative for the repeated support and consideration from the ECHO Foundation for projects like this.

McCain Foundation

The McCain Foundation was established in 1993 and has a longstanding legacy of supporting positive change across Canada. The foundation focuses on the Atlantic Provinces, Alberta, and Manitoba - all areas where McCain Foods Ltd. operates.

Their support to the securement of the Eastern Kings Hardwoods is greatly appreciated. We are thankful for their continued support towards protecting PEI's natural spaces.



Lives Well Lived

Like so many Prince Edward Islander's, Ron and Elaine (Monkley) Leard were proud to call this Island home. They enjoyed exploring the Island with friends and family and never hesitated at a chance to showcase its natural beauty with visitors.

It is because of this love for PEI that they wanted to include the Island Nature Trust as part of their memorial legacy. Ensuring that the landscapes and natural areas be safeguarded for generations to come was always top of mind. Supporting INT in its goal of environmental stewardship across PEI is truly a lasting legacy to celebrate.

-Steven Leard

Island Nature Trust is grateful to the Leard family for their generous donation in memory of their parents.

Every gift makes a difference and has a lasting conservation impact.

Contact Melissa, our Executive Director, to discuss donation options and legacy gifts.

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admin@islandnaturetrust.ca



An evening with Suzanne Simard

On the evening of April 30, 2026, the Florence Simmons Performance Hall was alive with the kind of energy that only happens when the right story meets the right audience. Island Nature Trust and Bookmark welcomed a packed house of nature lovers, conservationists, and the simply curious for a conversation that was equal parts science, wonder, and hope: an evening with Dr. Suzanne Simard, in conversation with Dr. Kathy Martin.

Dr. Simard, professor of forest ecology at UBC and author of the bestselling 'Finding the Mother Tree', was in Charlottetown to share her new book, 'When the Forest Breathes': a work that weaves rigorous science together with long-overlooked Indigenous knowledge to offer a genuinely hopeful vision for the future of our forests and our climate. At its heart is a concept that has reshaped how scientists and the public alike understand woodland ecosystems: the underground fungal networks, or "Wood Wide Web," through which trees exchange carbon, water, nutrients, and care.

And anchoring it all, the Mother Trees: the oldest, largest trees in a forest, acting as hubs of communication and sustenance for everything around them.

Guiding the evening's discussion was Dr. Kathy Martin, a wildlife ecologist whose career has taken her from forest habitats to arctic tundra to alpine peaks, and who, as it happens, knows Dr. Simard well from their years together at UBC. A proud Islander and board member of Island Nature Trust, Dr. Martin brought warmth, depth, and no shortage of sharp questions to the stage.

The two scientists spoke about the science of forest communication, the urgency of protecting mature and old-growth stands, and the profound alignment between Western ecological research and the knowledge Indigenous peoples have carried for generations

The event raised over \$11,000 for Island Nature Trust's work: a remarkable result made possible in part by a generous \$5,000 matching donation from Bookmark.

Recent Events

Wetland Webinar for Guardians

PEI'S WETLANDS:
What They Are, Why They Matter, and How You Can Help



Winter Animal Adaptations and Nature Hike with Girl Guides of Canada



Winter Woodlot Tour

Creating model wetlands with Grade 5 Students in Kensington



Piping Plovers of Moonlight Bay Documentary Screening



International Women's Day Hike at Buote Heritage Woods Natural Area



Family Fishing Day



INT and the PEI Invasive Species Council, paired up with the Morell River Management Cooperative to support their annual Family Fishing Day.

We spent the day collecting and inspecting macroinvertebrates, chatting with over 40 people about freshwater health, and of course, getting a couple casts in ourselves! All in all, we had a great time exploring what secrets were hidden at Mooney's Pond.



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

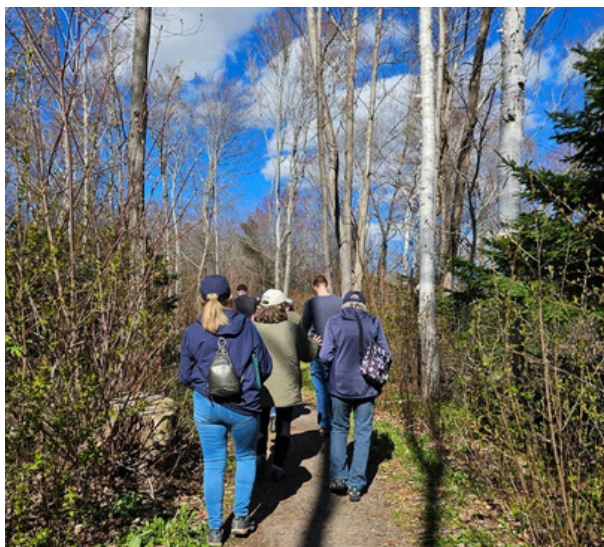


Canada
Water Agency

Agence de l'eau
du Canada

Conservation Guardians

Stewardship staff hosted four in-person Conservation Guardian training sessions for the Spring 2026 season. We are pleased to announce 23 new Guardians and 11 returning Guardians participated.



A few volunteers have stepped up to manage the collection of insects in two malaise traps at Buote Heritage Woods Natural Area and Jenkins Complex Natural Area! This is an opportunity provided by the Centre for Biodiversity Genomic's [BugQuest](#) program. When the program concludes we will receive a report that contains a list of species detected in the trap.

Ten new and returning Guardians also participated in an online training session where they learned how to utilize the monitoring platform *Landscape*, on their mobile device and browser.



BugQuest malaise trap set up to collect insects at Buote Heritage Woods Natural Area.



Stewardship Update

Stewardship staff have been hard at work at two INT-owned properties, Pisquid River Natural Area and Stuart Memorial Woodland Natural Area, implementing a pilot project funded by RBC Foundation. The project focuses on restoring degraded forests and monitoring the restoration progress over time.

First our teams mapped the test plots on the computer and then set off into the woods to make sure the plots were suitable for the project.



Left: Mapped plots

Right: INT staff member marking plot locations

For plots deemed suitable, staff inventoried the tree species present to record the pre-treatment conditions.

Next, staff implemented various silvicultural (forestry) techniques to start the restoration process. All techniques used focus on restoring a diverse species mix and manipulating light reaching the forest floor.

By using girdling, shown below, we allow the overstory vegetation to die off and create random canopy gaps that mimic natural processes. This patchy effect will allow diverse species, such as the maple below, to move in and replace the canopy over time.



Plantation stand treated by girdling.

INT will monitor the progress of the treated plots over time as compared to a control plot. We will take measurements including plant regeneration, plant growth, temperature, humidity, and habitat usage by wildlife.

Our goal with the project is to provide examples for woodlot owners and Islanders to consider when managing their forests. Using a project that implements control plots allows participants to make a visual comparison of the changes to the plots over time.



Kaylee Busniuk
Stewardship & Engagement
Manager

Piping Plover

Update

Our piping plover field season is underway, with our first brood of chicks having hatched on June 9th!

Island Nature Trust staff and our team of volunteers have been monitoring beaches outside of the PEI National Park for piping plover since April. Once plover are identified on a beach, we install signage and symbolic fencing to reduce disturbances around nest sites, and speak with beachgoers about the species.

This year, we are incredibly grateful for the generous support we received from the PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund. Their contributions have allowed our team to continue this important work despite reductions in federal funding. Thanks to them, our small team has been able to continue monitoring this endangered (and endearing!) little shorebird.



Credit: Don Cassidy Photography



Credit: Don Cassidy Photography

You can help protect piping plover and the larger coastal ecosystem by:

- Walking on the wet sand
- Keeping your dog on leash
- Giving shorebirds lots of space
- Respecting posted signage and steering clear of fenced off areas

We are also supported by an incredible team of volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering you can contact us to be added to the list for 2027!



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Pictured: Cottongrass (*Eriophorum* sp.) blowing in the wind at Alaska Forest Natural Area.