

**Final Report to
NS Department of Natural Resources
Habitat Conservation Fund (HCF)**

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Project Title: Connecting South Shore Youth to Coastal Birds & Habitats.

Project Overview: Connecting South Shore Youth to Coastal Birds and Habitats engaged hundreds of elementary, junior high, and high school youth and educators in coastal bird education, science and conservation within schools and at coastal habitats in Queens and Shelburne Cos. Visual presentations and hands-on activities shared key concepts about biodiversity, Important Bird Areas, species at risk, and bird monitoring. Monitoring and conservation activities benefited coastal wildlife and habitats on the South Shore.

Project Goals: The long-term goal of this project is to support coastal conservation and biodiversity, and to build a strong stewardship ethic within South Shore communities. The short-term goal is to engage youth in genuine science and conservation action that benefits birds and their habitats within South Shore Important Bird Areas.

Project Objectives and Work Completed:

Objective 1. Increase knowledge among elementary, middle and high school youth about South Shore coastal birds and the important habitats, such as sandy beaches and islands, for breeding and migratory wildlife and species at risk.

Through educational presentations in schools, hands-on activities, and experiences in the field, we shared key concepts about coastal habitats, species at risk and other coastal wildlife. To further enhance student knowledge, we led in-class workshops before field trips to local IBAs. In-class workshops were adapted to include relevant information depending on season. Workshops included descriptions and images of habitat types as well as basic information about common coastal birds that use the IBA and threats.

Objective 2. Integrate Bird Studies Canada's youth education activities into on-going bird monitoring and conservation initiatives within South Shore Important Bird Areas.

Since the designation of 32 IBA sites in Nova Scotia in the late 1990s, focused work on IBA conservation and monitoring has been limited and many Nova Scotians remain largely unaware of the meaning, purpose and location of IBAs. In 2010, Bird Studies Canada took up the IBA program in Nova Scotia and, through funds from NS Habitat Conservation Fund, began engaging adult citizens in monitoring and conservation activities at IBAs. This project initiative focused on engaging youth in science and conservation at IBAs by introducing them to the IBA in their coastal 'backyard' and by engaging them in science and conservation action at IBAs. As shown in Table 1, we were successful in reaching and engaging hundreds of youth and dozens of educators from South Shore communities. Through this project, participants learned about important coastal habitats, species at risk, as well as tangible ways to help and get involved in

science and conservation. Participants gained valuable skills, such as how to observe birds, count flocks and assess threats to habitats.

Objective 3. Engage at least 125 junior and high school youth in hands-on, bird monitoring and conservation activities along the coast with a focus on significant bird habitats within designated South Shore Important Bird Areas: East Queens, Port Joli, Roseway-Baccaro, Barrington Bay and Eastern Cape Sable.

We engaged 173 junior high and high school youth in bird and habitat monitoring and one habitat clean-up at South Shore IBA sites (see Table 1). Typical field experiences included site orientation, examination of types of habitats, assessing and documenting threats to habitats (e.g., ATV use), documenting number and species of birds and how birds were using habitats. Student data from Shelburne Regional High School was uploaded to eBird.ca.

Objective 4. Share endangered Piping Plover and beach habitat conservation messages with over 400 grade 2-3 youth through interactive presentations with 75% of all classes engaged in an annual Piping Plover Poster contest - a “teacher-approved,” in-class, art and science activity.

We achieved our objective of sharing conservation messages about Piping Plover and beach habitat with over 400 grades 2-3 youth (see Table 1). In total, 546 youth participated in our interactive, educational presentations. Some were older elementary youth. Of the grades 2-3 youth, we engaged roughly 60% in our annual Piping Plover poster contest, which was below our target of 75%. This is due to the fact that a large group from Liverpool did not participate in the poster activity.

Achievements and Lessons Learned:

Overall, we feel that this project was a great success. Despite challenges in coordinating with schools and organizing field trips and the necessary logistics (e.g., school bus transport) we met our primary targets for engaging youth. We provided high quality experiences for junior high and high school youth to learn and participate directly in science and conservation action at IBAs.

Acknowledgements:

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Table 1. Summary of Youth Engagement at South Shore IBAs & In-class Educational Outreach.

Date	School Name	Grade level	School Location	Activity Description	# Youth engaged	# Educators engaged
In-class presentation and engagement activities at South Shore schools						
15 April 2011	Hillcrest Academy	2-3	Shelburne	In-class presentation on beach habitat and how to help endangered Piping Plover. About 60% of grades 2-3 were engaged in the Piping Plover poster contest.	82	3
26 April 2011	Mill Village Elementary	2-3	Mill Village		21	1
28 April 2011	Lockeport Elementary	2-3	Lockeport		42	2
3 May 2011	Evelyn Richardson Elementary	2-3	Woods Harbour		22	1
3 May 2011	Clark's Harbour Elementary	2-3	Clark's Harbour		26	2
4 May 2011	Forest Ridge Elementary	2-3	Barrington		61	5
5 May 2011	North Queens Elementary	2-6	Caledonia		57	3
2 June 2011	Dr. J. Wickwire Elementary	2-3	Liverpool		125	10
16 June 2011	Hebbville Academy	1-2	Bridgewater		62	4
20 June 2011	West Northfield Elementary	6	West Northfield		24	1
27 Sept 2011	West Northfield Elementary	6	West Northfield	24	1	
Sub-total					546	33
In-field engagement activities at South Shore IBAs						
19 April 2011	Shelburne Regional High	8-11	Shelburne	Bird & habitat monitoring at South Shore (Port Joli sector) IBA	12	3
30 April 2011	Gulf of Maine Institute	8-12	Communities around Maritimes	Bird count & habitat workshop at South Shore (Roseway-Baccaro sector) IBA	32	7
7 Oct 2012	Barrington Municipal High	7-9	Barrington	Habitat clean-up at E. Cape Sable Island IBA	30	3
7 June 2011	Shelburne Regional High	8-11	Shelburne	Bird monitoring at South Shore (Roseway-Baccaro sector) IBA	9	1
22 June 2011	North Queens Regional	7-8	Caledonia	Bird & habitat monitoring at South Shore (Port Joli sector) IBA	36	6
13 Dec 2011	Shelburne Regional High	9-11	Shelburne	Bird & habitat monitoring at South Shore (Roseway-Baccaro sector) IBA	15	2
12 June 2012	Barrington Municipal High	7-8	Barrington	Bird & habitat monitoring at South Shore (Roseway-Baccaro sector) IBA	24	3
15 June 2012	Shelburne Regional High	7-9	Shelburne	Bird & habitat monitoring at South Shore (Barrington Bay sector) IBA	15	1
Sub-total					173	26