

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

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**Project Title:** Enhancing habitats and conserving birds and other wildlife at Important Bird Areas in NS

**Project Overview:** Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are global biodiversity hot spots. This project engaged over 100 individuals, community groups and conservation partners in hands-on activities that benefitted wildlife and their habitats at IBAs around NS. Project activities focused on enhancing habitats, reducing threats to birds and other wildlife, and increasing stewardship of IBA sites.

**Project Goal:** This project aimed to enhance habitats for birds and other wildlife and increase community-based stewardship at Important Bird Areas (IBAs) in NS by engaging individuals, community groups and other partners in targeted conservation actions.

### Project Objectives and Work Completed

**Objective 1. Engage individuals, community groups and other partners in planning and executing conservation activities that benefit habitats, birds and other wildlife and foster long-term stewardship at 15 of Nova Scotia's 32 IBA sites.**

In consultation with partners, we identified opportunities to engage the public, groups, and partners in hands-on conservation activities at IBAs. Suitable project activities were selected based on recommendations, identifying ongoing work by partners, conservation plans (e.g., recovery plans), and the IBA Canada site.

**Table 1** summarizes numbers of people engaged in activities at different IBAs as well as various partners with whom we collaborated on activities during project. In total, we worked with over 10 partners to identify potential habitat and wildlife. We engaged 213 people in hands-on conservation activities at 13 IBA sites across the province.



*Port Joli IBA Wild for Waterfowl Event participants (Nov 2014)*

We surpassed our target of five partners engaged in the project and successfully coordinated activities at IBA sites in all target geographic regions (Bay of Fundy, South Shore, Eastern Shore, Northumberland Strait, and Cape Breton Island). However, due to harsh winter and spring weather in 2015, we were unable to meet our target of activities in 15 IBAs. At several sites, volunteers were trained as local stewards.

**Objective 2. Enhance habitats and reduce threats to breeding, wintering and migrating birds and other wildlife through targeted conservation actions at IBA sites.**

In total, 24 activities were conducted that enhanced habitats and reduced threats to birds, other wildlife and plants at 13 IBA sites. **Table 1** provides a full summary of activities as well as key outcomes. The following four examples provide more details on some key activities and conservation outcomes from the project.

### Cape Sable Island IBA

A key goal of this project was to enhance habitats by reducing threats and fostering stewardship. We focused on IBAs with higher threats from recreational activities and all-terrain vehicles (ATV). For example, at Cape Sable Island IBA we worked with youth and educators from Clark's Harbour Elementary School to create colourful signs sharing stewardship messages. We focused on developing signs for Daniels Head beach, which

supported four pairs of nesting endangered Piping Plovers and had high levels of illegal vehicle use. Beyond the value of engaging local youth in this activity, we also observed a positive outcome for habitats and wildlife. After setting up the youth-made signs in late June, we observed a 65% decrease in numbers of ATVs in July and August and seven plover fledglings were produced.



Clark's Harbour Elementary School youth showing their newly painted signs for Cape Sable Island IBA

### Brier Island & Offshore Waters IBA

Brier Island IBA is one of the most significant IBAs in NS due to the abundance of diverse groups of birds and other biodiversity values, including critical habitat for endangered eastern mountain avens. We partnered with Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Natural Resources on a weekend stewardship event in August of 2014 with the goal to engage residents and visitors in stewardship action in the IBA and build local support and input for wetland habitat restoration. The event was such a success that we repeated it in August 2015. In total, the two events engaged 40 residents and visitors. We also connected with two local businesses to raise awareness about the IBA and produced an article in the local newspaper, *In With The Tides*, which acknowledged support from NS Habitat Conservation Fund.



Fencing and IBA signage was placed by volunteers in sensitive wetland and dune habitat on Brier Island & Offshore Waters IBA.

### The Brothers IBA

This IBA supports a significant portion of Canada's endangered Roseate Tern population as well as Arctic and Common terns. Ted d'Eon is the local steward of the IBA. We assisted Ted and partners from EC-Canadian Wildlife Service and Université de Sainte-Anne with an annual spring clean-up at the IBA to ready the island for breeding terns. Over 50 tern nest boxes were cleaned and ten bags of plastics and hazards to adults and chicks (e.g., fishing line) were removed from the nesting habitat.



Roseate Tern nest boxes cleaned and readied for the spring arrival of nesting terns on The Brothers IBA.

### **Glance Bay IBA**

This IBA benefitted from enhanced stewardship from local volunteers and dedicated conservation partner, ACAP- Cape Breton. We worked closely with staff from ACAP-CB as well as Natural Resources on building community awareness and engagement at this IBA through a well-attended shoreline clean-up event. This event helped us recruit and train six new IBA stewards. Working with ACAP-CB was key to connecting with local residents and we look forward to continuing this partnership in the future.



Hazards, such as monofilament fishing line, were removed from coastal habitats at numerous IBAs, such as Glance Bay IBA.

### **Objective 3. Communicate results to NS Habitat Conservation Fund and other partners.**

We communicated project results to partners in a variety of ways. We consulted with partners to gain insights into conservation priorities and opportunities for activities at IBAs. We conducted post-activity debriefs with participating volunteers and partners, including acknowledgements and thank-yous. We produced a handout for Brier Island & Offshore Waters IBA that highlighted support from NS HCF. Three articles in local newspapers were produced that shared key results with the public. We also posted updates via Facebook.

### **Achievements and Lessons Learned:**

Overall, we feel that this project was very successful. We were somewhat overambitious with our goal of targeting 15 IBAs in NS and reached only 13 sites due largely to weather challenges during winter and spring of 2015. However, we surpassed our goal of numbers of people engaged. We had hope to conduct more enhancement activities on seabird breeding islands, but scheduling boats and the narrow window of appropriate timing for such activities were challenges. In conclusion, coastal habitats were enhanced through this project through clean-ups, targeted stewardship, monitoring, and improved signage. We further strengthened the network of partners engaged in the IBA Program. We engaged over 200 volunteers in addition to numerous partners across the province.

We are grateful to the Habitat Conservation Fund for supporting this project. We also thank all volunteers and the following individuals and partners who greatly assisted in project planning and activities:

ACAP-Cape Breton

Duncan Bayne (NS DNR)

Clark's Harbour Elementary School

Economy Young Naturalists

Ted d'Eon

Gail Geddes (NS DNR)

Helen Gorham (Barrington Reg. High School)

Diana Hamilton (Mt. Allison U.),

Colin MacKinnon (CWS)

Mary Manning (Shelburne Reg. High School)

Julie McKnight (EC- Canadian Wildlife Service)

Municipality of District of Shelburne

Roger Outhouse (Gulf of Maine Institute)

Julie Paquet (EC- Canadian Wildlife Service)

Terry Power (NS DNR)

Mark Pulsifer (NS DNR)

Donald Sam (NS DNR)

Société acadienne de Saint- Croix

Sally Steele (NS Environment)

Doug van Hemessen (NCC)

Dirk van Loon (Harrison Lewis Centre)

Alice Walker (NSNT)

Rick Whitman & Blomidon Naturalists Society

**Table 1. Description of habitat enhancement activities within Nova Scotia IBAs during project period.**

Region/IBA Site	On-the-ground Actions	Key Outcomes	# People Engaged	Partners Engaged/ Collaborators
<b>Bay of Fundy Region</b>				
Brier Island & Offshore Waters	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Two events conducted trail maintenance to reduce motorized vehicle impacts on wetland habitats.</li> <li>2. Two coastal habitat clean-ups.</li> <li>3. Improved signage to raise awareness about IBA.</li> <li>4. Developed and disseminated flyer about IBA to local businesses.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protected sensitive wetland habitats from motorized vehicle use using rope fencing.</li> <li>• &gt; 20 bags waste and recycling, including hazardous materials and monofilament, removed from beach, dunes and wetlands.</li> <li>• Connections made with business owners.</li> <li>• Residents and visitors informed about IBA through local newspaper and flyer.</li> </ul>	40	Nature Conservancy of Canada Brier Island Lodge NS Natural Resources
Minas Basin	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Shorebird roost habitat clean-up.</li> <li>6. Improved signage to inform visitors and reduce disturbances to sensitive habitats and wildlife.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 bags waste removed, including hazardous monofilament.</li> <li>• “Be a friend to the shorebirds” signage in place to reduce disturbance to shorebirds.</li> </ul>	4	Blomidon Naturalists Society NS Natural Resources
Cobequid	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Consulted with CWS shorebird biologist to understand priorities for this IBA.</li> <li>8. Planned and cancelled (due to weather) educational activity with Economy Young Naturalists.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on assessment and consultation with CWS shorebird biologist, it was decided that this site was low priority for action.</li> </ul>	0	EC- Canadian Wildlife Service Economy Young Naturalists
<b>Cape Breton Island</b>				
Glace Bay	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Human disturbance reduction.</li> <li>10. Shorebird nesting habitat clean-up.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Six volunteers trained as stewards to reduce disturbance to beach nesting birds, two of whom conducted multiple visits.</li> <li>• 20 bags waste removed from shoreline, including rope and oil containers.</li> </ul>	27	ACAP-Cape Breton NS Natural Resources
<b>South Shore Region</b>				
The Brothers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Endangered Roseate Tern nest box enhancement.</li> <li>12. Tern nesting habitat clean-up.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• &gt;50 tern nest boxes cleaned and readied for 2015 breeding season.</li> <li>• 10 bags waste removed from seabird colony, including oil containers.</li> </ul>	4	Local steward, Ted d’Eon EC- Canadian Wildlife Service Université de Sainte-Anne

Region/IBA Site	On-the-ground Actions	Key Outcomes	# People Engaged	Partners Engaged/ Collaborators
Eastern Cape Sable Island	13. Creation of local youth-made signs to reduce ATV disturbance in beach habitat.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 local youth and 3 educators engaged in creation of special youth-made signs focusing on best practices on beaches.</li> <li>65% decrease in ATVs after signs were placed on beach.</li> </ul>	13	Clark's Harbour Elementary School
Barrington Bay	14. Reducing human disturbance to nesting shorebirds using signage and one-on-one education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced disturbance by beach users to flightless chicks during annual Lobster Boat Race resulting in all four chicks successfully fledged.</li> </ul>	2	NS Natural Resources
Bon Portage	15. Coastal habitat clean-up led by NS Nature Trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NS Nature Trust conducted coastal habitat clean-up and hazard removal.</li> </ul>	N/A	NS Nature Trust is the property steward of this site and led this activity.
Baccaro-Roseway	16. Reducing human disturbance to breeding wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20 local youth and 5 educators engaged in signage set-up at Crow Neck beach.</li> <li>100% walkers respected sign marking sensitive habitat.</li> <li>Advised NS Env and DNR on placement of rocks to limit ATV access to Crow Neck (provincial Nature Reserve) resulting in reduced ATV use.</li> </ul>	25	Gulf of Maine Institute
Port Joli	17. Waterfowl count and shoreline clean-up 18. Shorebird breeding habitat clean-up. 19. Shoreline habitat clean-up and waterfowl count.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>35 volunteers removed waste from coastal waterfowl and shorebird habitat.</li> <li>Data on over-wintering waterfowl within IBA collected and shared on eBird.ca and with partners.</li> <li>6 volunteers reduced disturbance to nesting Piping Plovers through signage and educational outreach.</li> </ul>	41	Nature Conservancy of Canada Harrison Lewis Centre NS Natural Resources Municipality of District of Shelburne
Eastern Queens	20. Signage and targeted outreach to visitors to reduce disturbance to Piping Plover and other coastal birds by walkers and off-leash dogs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protected sensitive habitats and nesting birds from disturbance.</li> <li>98% increase in dogs on-leash at Cherry Hill beach, a key stopover site for migrating shorebirds.</li> <li>100% walkers respected sensitive nesting habitat marked by signs.</li> <li>Informed NS DNR and NS Environment staff and conservation officers on threats to habitats and wildlife.</li> </ul>	5	NS Natural Resources NS Environment
<i>Eastern Shore Region</i>				
Musquodoboit	21. Shorebird and waterfowl habitats along shoreline. 22. Improved signage to inform visitors about IBA and wildlife habitats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15 bags of waste removed from shoreline habitat including fishing line and other hazards.</li> <li>IBA sign set up in partnership with NCC.</li> </ul>	40	Nature Conservancy of Canada NS Dept. Natural Resources

<i>Northumberland Shore Region</i>				
Pomquet Beach Complex	23. Predator perch removal. 24. Stewardship by community members, including signage creation to promote safe use and reduce disturbance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predator perches removed from endangered Piping Plover nesting habitat.</li> <li>• Local volunteer trained as steward and conducted regular visits to IBA.</li> <li>• Signs developed by four youth from Soc. Acadienne de Sainte-Croix.</li> </ul>	12	Societe Acadienne Sainte Croix NS Natural Resources
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>213</b>	