



CPAWS
CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR CHAPTER



Newfoundland Wilderness

SPRING 2017

Holly Lake Photo



President's Report

Greetings fellow nature devotees!

Another full and productive year has passed and it is almost hard to believe we are now into 2017.

While 2016 had its ups and downs in terms of parks and wilderness protection, rather than get hung up on *you-know-who-was-elected-president* in our neighbouring North American nation (and the potentially detrimental global environmental effects his impetuous new policies and ideologies may have in the near future), I would like to reflect on the positive experiences and good work happening at our regional chapter, CPAWS-NL.

I was fortunate to be able to

visit many of our provincial parks on the Northern Peninsula this past year, as well as the West and South coasts of the island. I was amazed by how wonderfully inspiring these places are and how lucky we are that they exist right here in our scenic backyard.

With an expected release of the Natural Areas System Plan, one of the longstanding goals of CPAWS-NL, our hope is that these areas and others will

receive a higher level of management in our province as part of building a more sustainable future.

Our ever-popular Puffin and Petrel Patrol

continues to go strong, with hundreds of volunteers pitching in to rescue, tag and release stranded birds each August to October. Our efforts to build awareness around the effects of shore-based

activities, specifically around bright lights, has been paying off, as we encountered fewer stranded birds last summer.



Dena Wiseman Photo

In other shore and ocean-based programming, we piloted a Marine Waste Management project in Petty Harbour aimed at creating awareness with local fishers and other ocean users with the hope that any waste generated while at sea will be brought back to shore and disposed of in accordance with provincial regulations.

Ocean conservation is an important issue for the CPAWS family, and while I welcome the development of the highly proactive Lancaster Sound National Marine Conservation Area in the arctic, we still have a long way to go in establishing the necessary environmental protection for our oceans and along our coastlines.

That's just 10 per cent of a national goal of protecting 10 per cent of our oceans by 2020.

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee has echoed our call for a buffer zone to be established around Gros Morne National Park, including terrestrial and marine boundaries. This is a great support for CPAWS' Save Gros Morne campaign.

We're also working on updating the Special Marine Areas Guide, which will complement the previous document released in 2009. Stay tuned!

As you probably know, 2017 marks Canada's 150th anniversary. To celebrate, Parks Canada is offering a free pass for the year.

I encourage you to enjoy our national treasures, but to also try and take in the natural settings in a less intrusive way through low impact activities. The 2016 report "The State of Canada's Natural and Cultural Heritage Places" shows that Canada's parks are under ecological pressure as visitation and related development rises.

To end on a positive note, I would like to thank our office staff and volunteers, who work hard to help ensure our province has wild spaces and ecologically rich oceans for future generations. I also heartily applaud our chapter's board of directors for their dedication and the work they do, such as offering expert support for staff, reporting on the condition of our beaches and wilderness areas, and installing signage in ecological areas to educate ocean goers about safely encountering whales and seabirds. I wish you all the best as 2017 progresses into what I hope will be another wonderful and nature-filled year.

Dan Ficken



Gros Morne - Photo by Holly Lake



Preserving our 'fog forest'

Aaron O'Brien Photo

By: Ian Goudie, CPAWS-NL's Forest Science Advisor

The forests of the central Avalon Peninsula comprise a very unique but very small -- less than 500 km² -- eco region on the island of Newfoundland. Annual precipitation exceeds 1200 mm, and that means that more water gathers than is evaporated by the sun and wind.

As we all know, there's water everywhere here. We have a boreal rain forest and its frequent blanketing in fog has led to coining it the 'fog forest'.

The older forests are abound with tree lichens and the forest floor is blanketed in rich green mosses. Forest scientists have noted how for this balsam fir forest the yellow birch occurred beyond the deeper river valleys and onto the ribbed moraines that insinuate the interior landscape.

The Avalon Peninsula supports more than half of the province's human population and the pressure on the forest has left much of it fragmented.

This is of concern because intact forest landscapes support a rich diversity of species and are an important reservoir for preserving biological diversity.

Our province has yet to produce a Natural Areas System Plan, and we have witnessed failure by successive governments to implement important strategies to protect our unique natural areas.

In 2014, the former government released its *Provincial Sustainable Forest Management Strategy*, providing an innovative approach by defining a series of special forest management areas that include commercial forest management areas, intact landscape forest management areas (ILFMA) and dynamic species specific areas (DSSA). This created a land-use planning policy framework to help ensure important areas of the landscape are optimized for their biological diversity.

Nearly 4 million hectares of landscape were designated an ILFMA in 2014, encompassing about 75 per cent of the woodland caribou range. The Avalon was not included in this intact deferral, yet it supports a herd of world-class prominence.

The herd was nurtured from near extinction from

poaching by the mid 1960s (only 65 remaining), to more than 7,500 by the early 1990s.

At that point it exceeded carrying capacity in the southern portions of its range and crashed in numbers. Part of the historical range for this herd included the interior peatland-forest mosaic in the Avalon Forest west of the Salmonier River and east of the Colinet River.

Caribou re-occupied the Colinet Bad Pond-Big Pond area in the mid-1980s, and it is important to continue to manage the landscape for continued persistence of this species there.

The Avalon Fog Forest's intact value is important to allow animals to disperse and minimize the effects of predators.



According to Environment Canada, human-related intrusions into the intact range have been the leading cause of declines in woodland caribou throughout the boreal forests of Canada. Most herds are now listed under the federal Species At Risk Act. For its 2017 campaign, CPAWS-NL is asking the provincial minister of fisheries and land resources to designate the 'Bad Pond-Big Pond Deferral' as a special forest management area.

Aaron O'Brien Photo





When the pony becomes the birdwatcher ...

By Jeannine Winkel

The trail around Bears Cove peninsula in Witless Bay is one of my favourite trails to go riding with Woody, our Newfoundland pony. Because this area is often frequented by shorebirds, I like to combine our trail rides with counting shorebirds for the Atlantic Canada Shorebird Survey.

With binoculars around my neck and a camera over my shoulder I ride along, scanning the shore for signs of bird activity. When I find some, we stop and I count the birds and try to take photos for later identification, all from my so comfortably warm seat.

Last winter, when there were purple sandpipers around the peninsula almost every time we went there, I started noticing Woody would sometimes stop 'randomly' by himself and when I then looked around, there were purple sandpipers foraging on the rocks just below us. This started happening too often to be just a coincidence, he had to have picked up on their chirps which he would detect much better than myself with his sensitive ears.



Jeannine Winkel Photos

This made me think. I wanted to figure out why on earth a pony would be interested in the sandpipers. Then it dawned on me: Whenever we stop for birds, we don't only stop and allow him to rest, but he is also allowed to graze, sometimes I even get off him for a while to sneak up closer to the birds for better pictures.

The grass growing closest to the edge of the ocean is his very favourite, because of the extra added salt. Like many ponies, Woody is very much food-motivated, so of course he would make a positive connection with finding birds and go as far as taking their presence as a signal to stop already, which then notifies me of their presence as well. So in a way I accidentally trained a Newfoundland pony to find purple sandpipers.



CPAWS-NL concerned about the status of Natural Areas System Plan

CPAWS NL is concerned about the changes made earlier this year by the provincial government to split up the Department of Environment and Climate Change and reassign it to other departments.

“By chopping it up and sending it to other departments, there is a very real risk that important conservation work will fall through the cracks,” says Suzanne Dooley, co-executive director of CPAWS-NL.

“We feel that it’s crucial that there be a minister whose sole responsibility is to consider impacts on the environment, as various issues are discussed at the cabinet table and that no longer appears to be the case.”

Tanya Edwards, co-executive director said CPAWS-NL is still assessing exactly what happened and who is now responsible for various conservation files.

Of particular concern are the changes to the Parks and Natural Areas Division. Newfoundland and Labrador is way behind other jurisdictions for the amount of land dedicated toward conservation.

The government has indicated that it will address this poor performance on protected areas by finally releasing the Natural Areas Systems Plan. Before the department was splintered off, the minister’s mandate letter stated:



“Advancing protected areas planning is central to environmental and cultural conservation, as well as to sustainable development. A well-governed and scientifically-based system for designating protected areas has the potential to benefit not only our environment, but our economy, through ecotourism and research endeavours. You are expected to finalize and publicly release a Natural Areas System Plan in collaboration with your colleagues. You must also develop a provincial wetlands strategy which will, among other things, guide development to avoid or reduce effects on our valuable wetlands. This strategy will provide a formal framework to support conservation work presently being undertaken by municipalities.”

“It was our understanding that the provincial government was making good progress internally to finalize the NASP and to protect these ecologically significant areas,” says Edwards.

“All of that has now been thrown into question. We’re looking for assurances from the province that the restructuring of the department will not slow down the release of the plan and we want to know when we can expect it to be released publicly.”

The Natural Areas System Plan has been in limbo for more than 20 years. It is a long overdue network of protected areas developed by the Newfoundland and Labrador government several decades ago, but never released publicly.

“These stalled protected areas represent some of the best remaining natural areas in the province, including incredibly significant coastal seabird colonies, species-at-risk habitat, and important wetland habitat,” Edwards says.

In May, CPAWS welcomed news that the House of Assembly had unanimously supported and passed a motion in support of more protected areas in the province.

The time is now for the province to finalize the plan and ensure that these precious remaining natural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador are protected once and for all.

Holly Lake Photos





Jeannine Winkel Photo

Don't be a stranger!

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Become a member of CPAWS-NL today to help support our efforts to keep Newfoundland and Labrador WILD! You can click [here](#) to donate.

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