

Protecting the Spaces We Love:

NOVA SCOTIA'S PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK

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Long Lake Provincial Park.
PHOTO: Paige Crowell

Peaceful Acadian forests, sweeping coastal vistas and productive wetlands. These are some of the natural havens found in Nova Scotia, and by 2030, 20% of the province's lands and waters will be formally protected. At least, that is one of the most important goals put forth in the province's *Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act*, passed in 2021. This vision builds on the *Nova Scotia Parks and Protected Areas Plan*, which has served as the foundation for area-based conservation in the province since 2013. In the last ten years, the province has increased the total share of Nova Scotia's protected lands by over 50%, earning it a B score in the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society's 2021 report *The Grades Are In: A Report Card On Canada's Progress in Protecting its Land and Ocean*, behind only Quebec and the Northwest Territories.

To support the goal of 20% protected lands by 2030, the provincial government recently announced \$20 million in funding to support NGOs in acquiring and protecting private land. Accompanying this funding announcement was a commitment to protect an additional 9,300 hectares of crown land, which will push the total share of protected areas in Nova Scotia above 13%. Future protection will be further supported by a protected areas strategy in development by the province and scheduled for release by 2024. A significant amount of additional Crown and private lands will need to be protected in order to reach the 20% by 2030 goal.

As Nova Scotia continues to expand its network of protected places, different designations are available under different legislation. Below are the most common types of terrestrial protected areas in Nova Scotia, and how protected they really are from human activities and impacts.

Protected area - **NATIONAL PARK**

Examples - Cape Breton Highlands National Park, Kejimikujik National Park

Purpose - Protecting and presenting outstanding representative examples of natural landscapes and natural phenomena.

Enabling legislation - *Canada National Parks Act*

Protection - National Parks are managed by Parks Canada. A national park reserve indicates a national park subject to Indigenous land claims negotiations, such as Sable Island National Park Reserve. National parks allow recreational activities such as camping and hiking in designated areas. Fishing with a permit is allowed, but hunting, or the use of firearms or motorized vehicles off-road are not permitted. Use of motorized watercrafts is only allowed in designated areas. Collecting plants, animal parts, rocks or wood is not allowed. Attempting to pet, harass or feed wild animals in national parks is also prohibited. Area closures and restrictions may be implemented to protect natural or cultural resources. Development of infrastructure may be permitted.

Protected area - **PROVINCIAL NATURE RESERVE**

Examples - MacDonalds Pond Nature Reserve, Shut-in Island Nature Reserve

Purpose - Preserve and protect, in perpetuity, representative (typical) and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and natural processes.

Enabling legislation - *Special Places Protection Act*

Protection - Provincial nature reserves are managed by the Department of Natural Resources. Scientific research and education are the primary uses of nature reserves. Activities that might degrade the reserve are restricted or prohibited. This includes forestry, mining and road-building. Access for environmental and nature appreciation is generally permitted; however, activities such as hunting, fishing and camping, as well as the use of vehicles, are restricted.

Protected area - **PROVINCIAL PARK**

Examples - Blomidon Provincial Park, Five Islands Provincial Park

Purpose - Protect nature and support a wide range of heritage values and opportunities for outdoor recreation, nature-based education and tourism.

Enabling legislation - *Provincial Parks Act*

Protection - Provincial parks are managed by the Nova Scotia Parks and Recreation Division, and allow recreational activities such as camping and hiking in designated areas. Fishing is permitted, however hunting and trapping are not. The use of firearms or motorized vehicles off-road are not allowed. Fires are allowed within designated areas, and fire wood cannot be transported into or out of the park. The Provincial Parks Act grants the provincial cabinet powers to decrease the size of a park, terminate the status of a park, grant leases for park land and to regulate the use of lands in a provincial park.

Protected area - **NATIONAL WILDLIFE AREA**

Examples - Chignecto National Wildlife Area, John Lusby National Wildlife Area

Purpose - Wildlife conservation, research and interpretation.

Enabling legislation - *Canada Wildlife Act*

Protection - National Wildlife Areas are managed by the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada, and restrict most human activities, including hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, industrial activity and disturbance or removal of materials from the area. However, permits may be issued for prohibited activities, provided they promote the protection and conservation of wildlife.

Protected area - **PROVINCIAL WILDERNESS AREA**

Examples - Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area, Eastern Shore Islands Wilderness Area, Tobatic Wilderness Area

Purpose - Protect the natural environment while providing opportunities for education, research, wilderness recreation and community stewardship.

Enabling legislation - *Wilderness Areas Protection Act*

Protection - Provincial Wilderness Areas are managed by the Department of Environment and Climate Change. Activities such as hiking, canoeing, skiing, birdwatching and kayaking are encouraged. Hunting, trapping and fishing are permitted. Other activities, such as using vehicles, building structures or trails and damaging or removing plants are also prohibited, except in certain circumstances as outlined in the Act. Commercial resource development, such as forestry, energy infrastructure and road building, is not permitted. Interests, such as mineral exploration licences and campsite leases, can be honoured in certain circumstances if these existed prior to designation of the wilderness area.

TAKE ACTION

To learn more about protected areas in Nova Scotia or to find a protected area near you, visit <https://novascotia.ca/nse/protectedareas/>

Protected area - **MIGRATORY BIRD SANCTUARY**

Examples - Amherst Point Migratory Bird Sanctuary, Kentville Migratory Bird Sanctuary

Purpose - Protection and conservation of migratory birds.

Enabling legislation - *Migratory Birds Convention Act*

Protection - The Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada is responsible for the management of migratory bird sanctuaries, although the sanctuaries can be located on federal, provincial or private land. Access to most sanctuaries is not restricted, however human activities that could harm migratory birds, their nests or their eggs are prohibited.

Protected area - **INDIGENOUS PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS (IPCA)**

Examples - Kluskap's Cave Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area

Purpose - To protect areas that Indigenous Peoples identify as holding ecological and cultural significance.

Enabling legislation - *Created by the Indigenous Circle of Experts (ICE)*

Protection - IPCAs are a newly recognised category of protected area that Indigenous Nations have identified for conservation under their inherent authority over their lands and water. IPCAs emphasise the connection between a healthy environment and a thriving culture and can come in various forms, but all share three qualities: they are Indigenous led, they represent a long-term commitment to conservation, and they elevate Indigenous rights and responsibilities. There are still questions around how IPCAs will be implemented under Canadian laws, but the federal government has shown increasing recognition that they are an integral part of both reconciliation and reaching our national protection targets.

The continued maintenance and transparent expansion of Nova Scotia's protected areas network is critical to supporting the province's ability to meet its environmental goals, and to ensuring the long-term protection of Nova Scotia's biodiversity and natural heritage, for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

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