



NATURE  
CONSERVANCY  
CANADA

# Conservation Impact Through Partnership

Natural Heritage Conservation Program  
2022–2023



## ABOUT NCC

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is the country's unifying force for nature. We use a science-based approach to seek solutions to the twin crises of rapid biodiversity loss and climate change through large-scale, permanent land conservation. We collaborate with a diversity of partners, including private landowners, government, Indigenous communities and industry. We often work where others cannot, removing roadblocks to conservation and supporting transformational projects for nature and people. We deliver impact by working on privately protected areas, and by complementing Crown-led and Indigenous-led conservation. Together with our partners, we have conserved more than 15 million hectares, equivalent to about 4,400 NHL-sized hockey rinks a day, since 1962!

### [natureconservancy.ca/nhcp](https://natureconservancy.ca/nhcp)

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## ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

Launched in 2007 as the Natural Areas Conservation Program, this unique partnership with Ducks Unlimited Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada and Canada's land trusts mobilizes Canadians to conserve and care for the places they cherish; places that support resilient communities in the face of climate change. The program contributes directly to Canada's ambitious goal of conserving 30 per cent of its lands and fresh waters by 2030. NCC is proud to produce the Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) Impact Report (2022–2023), spotlighting what the partnership has achieved in the past year and since its inception, including:

- connecting Canadians to nature: more than 95 per cent of Canadians live within 100 kilometres of a project conserved through the NHCP;
- supporting important stewardship work on nearly 300,000 hectares, including vital restoration actions that improve carbon sequestration and storage; and
- inspiring more than 400 donations of land from Canadians who care about conservation.

NCC respectfully acknowledges that the work we do across the country is on the traditional territories of many Indigenous Nations and communities, past and present. NCC thanks and honours these original caretakers and acknowledges the ongoing work and presence of Indigenous Peoples in Canada today.

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# A partnership for conservation



**In December 2022, at the UN Biodiversity Conference, (COP15),** Canada led the United Nations to adopt the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, opening a new chapter for nature conservation and biodiversity protection with a goal of protecting at least 30 per cent of lands and waters by 2030.

To achieve this goal, the Government of Canada is working on many fronts, including:

- providing contribution funding as part of Enhanced Nature Legacy for the securement of ecologically sensitive lands; and
- relying on collaboration:
  - with individuals, to make thoughtful and impactful decisions;
  - with Indigenous Peoples, to apply their unique knowledge and perspectives; and
  - with partners, to protect environmentally sensitive and biodiversity-rich lands across Canada.

One collaboration is with the Nature Conservancy of Canada and its partners. Through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program and Ecological Gifts Program, significant areas of land have already been protected, with plans for the securement of an additional 180,000 hectares. These programs help contribute to our conservation goals, and we could not do it without organizations like the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

Expanding protected and conserved natural areas is one of the most important actions we can take to curb the ongoing loss of nature and biodiversity. On behalf of Environment and Climate Change Canada, I congratulate the Nature Conservancy of Canada for its continuing achievements in conservation and environmental stewardship.

**The Honourable Steven Guilbeault, PC, MP**  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Government of Canada



**Over the past year, Canadians have witnessed the severe impacts of** climate change. Fires, drought and powerful storms are affecting communities across the country. And while nature can protect us from some of the worst effects and heal itself over time, it requires civil society to ensure that enough of it remains intact for the benefit of future generations. Thankfully, global support for this idea is growing.

The world gathered for COP 15 in Montreal in December 2022. The resulting Global Biodiversity Framework signed at COP 15 sets a course for the world to achieve key targets and objectives to address the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. The targets are an opportunity for Canada to demonstrate continued leadership in protecting our natural environment for future generations.

It's clear that a whole-of-society approach is needed. The Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) partnership is a platform that allows this approach to thrive. It is the basis for the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and Canada's land trusts to work with corporations, foundations and individuals to match government investment and maximize our impact.

Investing in the protection of nature now is among the most cost-effective choices we can make to address not only climate change, but the rapid loss of biodiversity. NHCP partners are mobilizing Canadians to support critical projects that result in durable conservation solutions. The NHCP makes our job a little easier.

We thank our partners in conservation and in the NHCP: our colleagues at DUC, Wildlife Habitat Canada, the Canadian Land Trust Working Group and the land trust community. We are also inspired by the many donors and landowners whose generosity is woven throughout our success stories. And we are grateful to Minister Steven Guilbeault and Environment and Climate Change Canada for this vital investment in conservation, part of the Government of Canada's Nature Fund.

And while the NHCP continues to catalyze conservation success across the country, the need remains to do even more. Thankfully, the desire is strong among NHCP partners, our donors and supporters to accelerate the pace of conservation and protect more of the lands we cherish and to deliver more impact. Nature is the key to our resilient future. When nature thrives, we all thrive.

**Catherine Grenier**  
President & CEO, Nature Conservancy of Canada

# Amplifying Indigenous-led conservation

The Nature Conservancy of Canada is prioritizing Indigenous pathways of land conservation and working collaboratively on the land

**Jennifer McKillop is the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC's) acting director, Indigenous engagement and conservation. She works with staff across the organization to establish priorities, policies and practices that support the direction of NCC's strategic plan. NCC is committed to supporting conservation through Reconciliation, as allies with the Indigenous-led conservation movement. NCC also aims to increase its understanding of Indigenous Peoples' rights, knowledge, responsibilities and relationships to the land.**



## **Why is Indigenous-led conservation important to NCC's Reconciliation journey?**

The conservation movement, including NCC, is beginning to recognize how our conventional conservation practice has ignored Indigenous rights, responsibilities and relationships to the land. This has been to the detriment of not only Indigenous Peoples, but to settler communities and to the land itself. There are direct connections between the severing of those reciprocal

relationships and the climate change and biodiversity loss crises. There is so much we have to learn from Indigenous leadership in conservation to address these challenges.

It is really complex and challenging to reimagine our conventional work toward Reconciliation and not perpetuate the harm that colonial approaches to conservation have created. Recognizing and acknowledging that harm is an important step in that

journey, but we need to ensure we are acting and making real meaningful change in how we approach our work.

## **How can NCC best support Indigenous communities in their work to protect the land?**

There are many ways for us to support Indigenous Nations in their work. For example, we can support the establishment of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) by providing technical and capacity support for

Indigenous-led conservation planning. We can share our expertise and experience to assist in removing barriers for IPCAs. As we work to articulate our role within this space, we need to ensure that what we bring to the table can add value to Indigenous-led conservation, and that we are being of service as partners and as allies. Sometimes that means walking together, and sometimes that means walking behind and providing support to Indigenous leadership. The best way to know how to support Indigenous Nations and communities is to listen, be humble and be open to learning new ways of thinking about our work.

### How is the NHCP supporting Indigenous-led conservation?

The NHCP has played a crucial role in supporting the development of NCC's cultural competency. Strong foundational knowledge is necessary to ensure we approach our work with Indigenous Peoples in a respectful and authentic manner. NCC has partnered with the University of Winnipeg to deliver Indigenous-developed programming that provides staff with a comprehensive

overview of Indigenous history, culture and Reconciliation. This is ongoing, required training for all NCC employees. The training helps our staff build collaborations with Indigenous Nations and communities in a culturally informed way.

Relationships approached with respect, humility and transparency have allowed us to collaborate on conservation planning with the Cree Nation Government in northern Quebec, stewardship partnerships in British Columbia with the Musqueam and Haida Nations, and the Saugeen Ojibway Nation and the Pays Plat First Nation in Ontario. It has informed our work to conserve and return the island of Kwasawek in Prince Edward Island to the original stewards, the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq.

The NHCP has also supported research and dialogue with partners within the Conservation Through Reconciliation Partnership, exploring the use of Indigenous-led land trusts as a potential model for Indigenous-led conservation. This research will inform NCC's approach to engaging with Indigenous

Nations and communities and exploring potential roles for NCC in supporting the creation of IPCAs on private land.

### What does the future of Indigenous-led conservation look like to you?

I think the most challenging, and exciting, part of Indigenous-led conservation is that we are still developing our understanding of what it will look like. Because it won't be defined by organizations like NCC; it will be defined by Indigenous Peoples. Based on what I have learned working with Indigenous communities, I think the future of Indigenous-led conservation looks like people on the land, learning from the land and reconnecting in a holistic way.

Elders and Knowledge Keepers have taught me that land conservation is more than protecting habitat and the species that we study from a textbook. It is about relationship, reconnection, language, cultural knowledge and ceremony, and about living up to the responsibilities that we have to the land and to each other. We all have responsibilities to be good. 🌿

# High-tech conservation

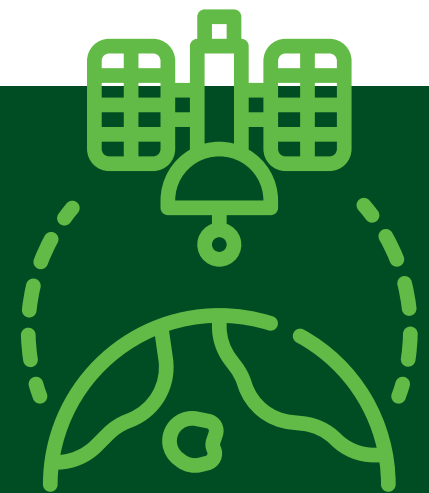
**F**or decades, private organizations like NCC, DUC and Canada's land trusts have used tried-and-tested techniques and technologies to identify and protect high-priority lands. Thanks to the NHCP, these groups are leveraging emerging technologies to make that work a whole lot easier.

The NHCP is supporting a growing partnership between NCC and Carleton University. Professor Joe Bennett and his GIS students used satellite imagery to map land cover. The goal is to develop a model that will help conservation organizations make more efficient and effective conservation decisions remotely.

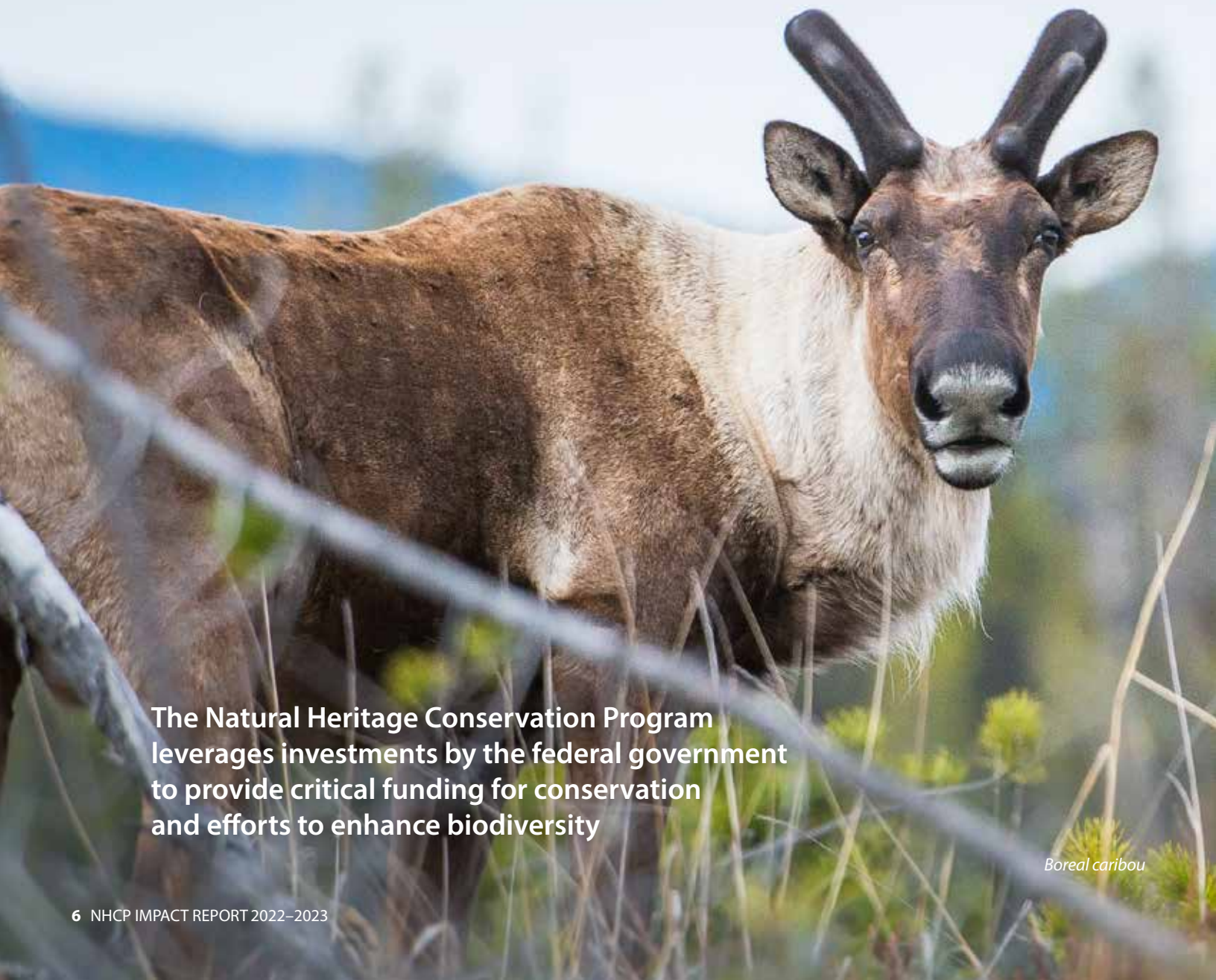
Professor Bennett is especially excited with the early results. "The potential for this work to help biodiversity in Canada is immense. The tools being designed will be crucial in helping conservation agencies improve their effectiveness," he notes. "When agencies

try to decide how to steward their land and water, we are hoping our tools can make that process easier."

The work is generating interest with other organizations aiming to conserve land in Canada. The project team has engaged governments, Indigenous agencies and other groups to inform tool design and help expand research horizons. "We will only accomplish our biodiversity goals by working in partnerships," adds Bennett. "If our tools can help facilitate that, I'll be very satisfied with our work." The NHCP will continue to support this partnership, and its benefits will sustain prosperous and healthy communities for generations to come.



# A model of conservation success



The Natural Heritage Conservation Program leverages investments by the federal government to provide critical funding for conservation and efforts to enhance biodiversity

*Boreal caribou*

# ion



Boreal Wildlands, ON



**T**he most recent *Wild Species report*, put out by the Canadian Endangered Species Conservation Council, paints a bleak picture. More than 2,000 animal and plant species have been identified as being at risk in Canada, and few are more iconic than boreal caribou.

So, when word reached Kristyn Ferguson this spring that two of these animals had been spotted within the boundaries of Boreal Wildlands — the first caribou sighting since Boreal Wildlands, the largest private conservation project ever undertaken in Canada, was established in 2022 — she and her colleagues at the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) were “over the moon.”

“It’s what we were hoping for,” says Ferguson, NCC’s director of large landscape conservation in Ontario, who has called the project “the most rewarding work I’ve done in my career.”

Boreal caribou are a forest-dwelling species that require large, contiguous areas of suitable habitat, with little disturbance. In Boreal Wildlands, which covers nearly 1,500 square kilometres of boreal forest in Northern Ontario, they get that in spades. The project covers an area twice the size of the city of Toronto, and boasts more than 100 lakes and 1,300 kilometres of rivers, streams and shoreline.

The effort to make this \$46-million project a reality and protect it for the long term

involved many NCC staff and an even larger number of external partners and donors. But none of it would have been possible without the support from the Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP).

The NHCP is a model of collaborative conservation that leverages investments by the federal government in selected projects under Canada’s Nature Fund. The program’s partners — NCC, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and local land trusts — then raise matching contributions to deliver conservation impact.

Since 2007\*, the NHCP partnership model has mobilized Canadians to protect nearly 800,000 hectares of lands and waters from coast to coast to coast by investing more than \$1.4 billion in the conservation of natural areas.

In the 2022–2023 program year, NCC, DUC and land trusts matched the Government of Canada’s \$25-million investment with \$107.5 million in contributions from public and

private sector organizations, foundations and individuals. In all, more than 97,000 hectares were protected thanks to NHCP support — an area larger than the city of Calgary.

No matter the size of the project, large or small, Ferguson says the NHCP helps partners stretch the program’s investments to maximize their impact. The NHCP provides critical funding that allows program partners to seize important conservation opportunities as they develop. These opportunities allow them to conserve more nature at a faster pace to help counter the dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.

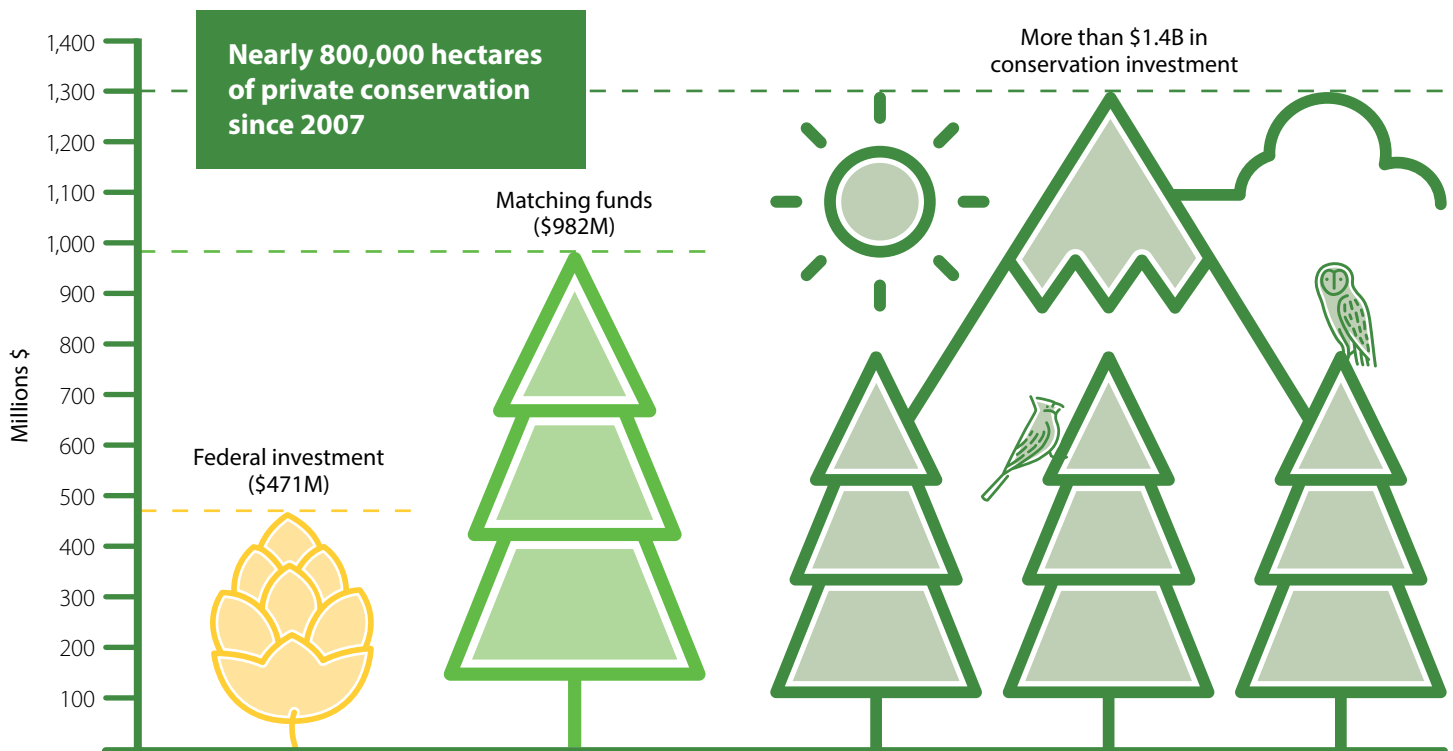
Boreal Wildlands is a case in point. Acquired from forest products company Domtar, which contributed \$7 million to the project in the form of a reduced purchase price, Boreal Wildlands is home to many large mammals, such as caribou, Canada lynx, black bear, wolf and moose. It provides nesting, breeding and migratory stopover habitat for many bird species, including the

threatened Canada warbler. Its forests and peatlands are also a massive carbon sink, storing 190 million tonnes of carbon, or the equivalent of the lifetime emissions of three million cars.

The latter has enabled NCC to create the Boreal Wildlands Carbon Project. Led by NCC’s Nature + Climate Project Accelerator, the carbon project is being developed under the internationally leading Verra Verified Carbon Standard and is anticipated to generate its first credits in early 2024. Initial investment in the project includes \$10 million from TD Securities. NCC is using carbon credit revenues to directly accelerate conservation in Ontario and across Canada.

“What sets this project apart is its scale and resulting impact,” says Ferguson about Boreal Wildlands. “Knowing that we had the support of the federal government gave us the confidence to take it on, bring it to donors, see who would be interested in matching it, and move into a broader fundraising campaign.”

\*The partnership was launched in 2007 as the Natural Areas Conservation Program. It became the Natural Heritage Conservation Program in 2019.







Moose



## NHCP accomplishments last year

Nearly **100,000 hectares**  
Total number of hectares conserved

**\$107.5 million**  
Total matching funds raised by NHCP partners

### Advancing Canada's 30x30 goals

**I**n Manitoba last year, NHCP support enabled DUC to partner with the provincial government on work that led to the designation of two ecologically valuable peatlands totalling nearly 28,000 hectares — Moswa (Moose) Meadows and Fish Lake Fen — as Provincially Significant Peatlands.

These peatlands are the first properties to achieve this designation under Manitoba's *Peatlands Stewardship Act*. The designation prohibits all development and industrial resource activity but allows access and traditional practices by Indigenous Peoples.

Moswa Meadows, located in west-central Manitoba, is a wetland complex in a region where moose populations are in prolonged decline. Its mix of bogs, fens and swamp is "fantastic habitat for moose," says Trent Hreno, DUC's head of industry and government relations, who led the initiative for DUC. "This property is like a salad bowl. This is what moose like."



Moswa Meadows, MB

Fish Lake Fen, about two hours north of Winnipeg, is a rare calcareous fen, so defined because the groundwater that feeds it is rich in calcium (calcareous fens are wetlands created by a continuous upwelling of groundwater). The wetland plant communities found in calcareous fens are equally rare. At Fish Lake Fen, these include the colourfully named yellow twayblade, showy lady's-slipper, bog goldenrod, and two kinds of sundew and beakrush.

"Like NCC, we do a lot of different land purchase projects and conservation

agreements. But we also have these huge area goals, and with the NHCP, it enables us to think outside the box a little bit," says Lauren Rae, DUC's national conservation biologist.

For Moswa Meadows and Fish Lake Fen, NHCP funding was critical in enabling Hreno and his team to assess the habitats, gather species data and draft a proposal to the government for their designation as a Provincially Significant Peatland.

...continued on page 12



# Natural Heritage Conservation Program

NCC, DUC and land trust securement projects as of March 31, 2023

- Nature Conservancy of Canada securement project
- Ducks Unlimited Canada securement project
- Land Trusts Conservation Fund securement project
- ✱ Secured between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023



...continued from page 9

Once that designation was achieved, it also meant the two properties could be submitted for inclusion in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas database. That registry tracks Canada's progress toward its goal of protecting 30 per cent of the country's lands and waters by 2030 (30x30), as part of Canada's commitments under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

It's in this broader context that the NHCP's value really resonates with Dawn Carr, NCC's director of strategic conservation. In her view, the NHCP's structure — requiring every project to have partners who match contributions — is now recognized as a “case study of success” in Canada and abroad.

“There's growing recognition that no one organization, including governments, can do biodiversity conservation on their own,” says Carr, who represented NCC at the UN's COP15 meetings in Montreal last December. “The NHCP program is a best-in-class example of how this kind of collaboration should work.”



## The Nature Conservancy of Canada making impact through the NHCP last year:

**66,236 hectares**  
Total number of hectares conserved

**\$69 million**  
Total matching funds raised by NCC



Canada warbler



Kenauk, QC

COP15 ended with the creation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, now signed by more than 190 countries. Not only does that framework enshrine the 30x30 target for all parties, but it also incorporates a principle that states that a “whole-of-government and whole-of-society” approach is needed to protect nature and halt biodiversity decline. “The NHCP has embodied those values right from the beginning,” says Carr.

This dimension is evident in the spectrum of NHCP-supported projects, Carr says. Each has “different partners, different sources of funding, different mechanisms and different conservation agreements that make particular projects sing and work.” But what unites them “is the diversity of partners that come together to find common interest around creating the change that needs to occur for durable conservation to take place.”

## A whole-of-society approach

**D**urable conservation and partnerships were very much on the minds of four Quebec families who last year donated 645 hectares on Lac Papineau, in the southern Laurentians, to NCC. This added valuable habitat to the nearly 7,000 hectares already under NCC's care there.

That transaction, which came with a pledge to also donate the rest of their lakeside land, was made possible with financial support from the NHCP and the Quebec government. But what makes this truly notable is that it is just the latest step in the families' larger quest to create a 26,000-hectare protected area that extends west and south from Lac Papineau, called the Kenauk Nature Reserve.

In 2015, these four families founded the Kenauk Institute, a charitable organization, to support and coordinate scientific research and promote environmental education on the Kenauk property. By that time, NCC was already working with the families of Doug Harpur, Dominic Monaco, Patrick Pichette and Mike Wilson on what has become a series of acquisitions within the reserve's boundaries. "Last year's transaction was phase five," says Marie-Andrée Tougas-Tellier, NCC's project manager who works in the area.

Two things make Kenauk important from a conservation standpoint. First, it contains expansive forests, including undisturbed old-growth forests and wetlands teeming with biodiversity. "There's very little human impacts on the land," says Liane Nowell, executive director of the Kenauk Institute. "We're up to 112 rare and endangered species inventoried on the property so far."

Second is its location. Situated north of the Ottawa River, halfway between Montreal and Ottawa, Kenauk is part of an ecological corridor linking Plaisance and Mont-Tremblant provincial parks. Farther south, the linkage extends over the St. Lawrence River to the Adirondacks. "It's an important corridor for animal migration," says Tougas-Tellier.

## Ducks Unlimited Canada making impact through the NHCP last year:



**27,752 hectares**  
Total number of hectares conserved

**\$5,616,000**  
Total matching funds raised by DUC

Because of these attributes, NCC sees its work with the Kenauk Institute as an opportunity to create a unique, permanent open-air lab devoted to studying the impacts of climate change.

"It's possible to look at how nature is adapting to climate change within Kenauk and outside Kenauk at sites that will be more modified by humans," says Tougas-Tellier. Permanent protection also makes long-term studies possible, she adds. "Researchers can come today and they know it will be possible to come back in 10, 20, 30 years to follow their research."

To make the full Kenauk vision a reality, NCC and the Kenauk Institute continue to raise funds for further acquisitions in the area. They are also creating a stewardship fund to ensure the Kenauk property can be protected and managed for the long term. Along with

the four families and the federal and provincial governments, other notable partners in this effort include Inovia Capital, Age of Union, Université du Québec en Outaouais and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Tougas-Tellier credits the NHCP for its ability to bring in other donor partners, including the four families and the Kenauk Institute, underscoring the importance of the whole-of-society approach enabled by the program.

"This is conservation done right," reflects Carr. "The power of this model of conservation is that we can bring partners from all sectors of society to work with us over the long term.

"In every province, on lands home to Canada's iconic habitats, the NHCP is a driving force of land protection and conservation." 🍂

Kenauk, QC



# Giving away a legacy

The NHCP has supported NCC and other organizations with accepting more than 400 land donations of ecological significance



Allan Bonnyman and NCC's Jaimee Morozoff



Meeting Creek, AB



Terry and Faith Gabert

**T**he Gaberts and the Bonnymans are two Canadian families with deep roots in the land. Despite living thousands of kilometres apart at near-opposite ends of the country, last year they were united in realizing a common goal: making generous gifts of ecologically valuable, family-owned properties to ensure the future of these natural areas.

Both agreements were made possible with support from the federal Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP), which funded the staff time, surveys and legal work needed to put the deals together.

The Gaberts partnered with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) to create a conservation agreement on a 129-hectare block of rare, unbroken native Prairie grassland in east-central Alberta. The land is part of a larger farm that the Gaberts purchased in 1974, in a region where only five per cent of the original, unmodified natural plant cover remains.

“We have seen some of this native pasture overgrazed and harmed. So, we wanted to put something in place that was going to protect our property from what might happen in the future,” says Faith Gabert.

The agreement allows for continued cattle grazing on the valley property but no other activity or alterations. This also ensures the integrity of the plains rough fescue grassland and the Meeting Creek waterway, a tributary of the Battle River, which flows through it.

“There’s a large diversity of plants and animals on the property,” says Jessica Hayes, NCC’s natural area manager for central Alberta. “When we met with the Gaberts, we heard a Sprague’s pipit, a threatened bird species in Alberta. That’s a good sign of a healthy grassland.”

Like the Gaberts, a similar motivation to protect local nature prompted Angus Bonnyman and his father, Allan C. Bonnyman, to donate close to 40 hectares of Nova

Scotia forest and wetland lakefront property to NCC last year.

Along with NHCP support, the donation qualified for tax incentives through the Ecological Gifts Program. Located on the west end of Mattall Lake, 15 kilometres from Tatamagouche, the property’s conservation value is twofold: it includes 13 hectares of older-growth eastern hemlock forest, as well as some of the last undeveloped shoreline on one of the few larger recreational lakes in the area.

“It protects a significant portion of the shoreline, including a forested swamp area that is one of the water sources for the lake,” says Jaimee Morozoff, NCC’s Nova Scotia program director, adding that both areas are important habitat for a wide variety of plants, forest birds and waterfowl.

The Bonnymans’ family connection to this land began in 1951. Angus’s grandfather ran a sawmill business and bought several properties, this one among them. His grandmother, meanwhile, grew up in the community of Appleton next to Mattall Lake.

“We didn’t think it needed more cottage pressure,” says Allan.

The desire to protect the hemlock forest, which Angus describes as “a magical place,” also stemmed from his and his father’s shared conservation ethos. “This is one of those areas that our family strongly feels should be protected and conserved,” Angus says.

The situation grew more urgent with the recent discovery of the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid, an aphid-like insect that can destroy hemlock forests, in southern Nova Scotia. Treatment requires monitoring and an early response.

“It’s not something that we could undertake ourselves. We don’t have the resources that NCC is able to draw upon,” says Angus. The fact that he and his husband have no children also meant they needed a succession plan.

“Sooner rather than later was the option we went with,” says Angus. “We had cared for the land as well as we could for as many years, as we owned it and wanted to pass it on to another caretaker that could look after it.” 🌿

**“We enjoy the wildflowers — crocuses, wood lilies and all sorts of shooting stars — and the wildlife. We always said we should do something to try to preserve this; it’s such a unique environment.”**

— Terry and Faith Gabert



*Shooting stars*

# Conserving working landscapes

The NHCP enables NCC to work with communities and ranchers to create lasting impacts that benefit us all

**N**orth America's native grasslands once flowed uninterrupted from Texas to Manitoba; today, they cover less than one-third of that range. And more are being lost to conversion and climate change every day. But southeast of Brandon, Manitoba, a ranching family is pushing back against this loss.

Through a conservation agreement between the Moore family and the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), and supported by the Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP), the future of more than 450 hectares of prairie ecosystems in southern Manitoba is ensured.

Eric Moore grew up on the working ranch now known as 21 Farms. He fell in love with its plants, animals and landscapes when he was young. Childhood picnics on the land have since given way to mental-health wanders as he's grown older. All along, he's

known that the land his family has cared for for over 100 years was special. "I think it's a beautiful place," Moore says. "I want people to enjoy it forever."

Moore and his wife, Carol, saw kindred spirits in NCC — people who, like them, were awed by the beauty of 21 Farms and wanted to ensure it stayed that way, long into the future. The Moores were motivated to donate a portion of the conservation agreement value. NCC then leveraged the NHCP to raise funds for the rest of the project. The lands will remain a working cattle ranch, contributing to the local economy while providing important ecosystem services to communities near and far, services like clean air and drinking water.

21 Farms consists of mixed-grass and sandhill prairie, as well as bur oak savannah and upland

forest. These ecosystems support many at-risk species, including Sprague's pipit, American badger and monarch. The mixed-grass prairies of 21 Farms are one of the last large expanses of intact grasslands in the province.

As NCC looks to halt and even reverse grassland losses in the Prairies, partnerships like the one forged with the owners of 21 Farms are critical. The NHCP enables NCC to work with communities, ranchers and other nature supporters to create lasting impacts that benefit us all. 🌿



21 Farms, MB

*Three-flowered avens*





Damascus, NB

# Strengthening Canada's network of protected areas

The NHCP is helping conservation groups acquire and safeguard protected areas for the long term

**T**he Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) is supporting conservation organizations like the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and Canada's land trusts to create new privately protected areas across the country. Each project adds to Canada's network of protected areas, ensuring connectivity between large expanses of wilderness while providing nature-based solutions like clean air and drinking water.

Support from the NHCP doesn't end once the land is protected. It also funds ongoing care for these areas, which often require ongoing restoration or management. The program drives important stewardship work for activities like general monitoring, reintroducing species, conducting prescribed burns, building wetlands, removing invasive species, and planting native trees, wildflowers and grasses.

The restoration and ongoing care of natural areas contributes to protecting biodiversity. Strategically restoring habitats can improve connectivity between isolated protected areas, allowing for the movement of animals and the dispersal of plants across the landscape. Well-managed and healthy landscapes also provide services such as cleaner air and drinking water, insect control, and flood protection to surrounding communities. Stewardship projects also support local economies by employing contractors and buying supplies from local organizations. 🌿

## Examples of recent stewardship activities supported under the NHCP:

### Enhancing biodiversity

*Elizabeth Walsh Nature Reserve (PEI)*

With help from the NHCP, NCC is restoring a former farm site to its previous natural state. By planting native trees and shrubs, NCC is restoring and enhancing the Wabanaki (Acadian) forest on the property. The nature reserve is located close to two provincial wildlife management areas. Restoration efforts here will enhance overall habitat for the species that rely on it, like woodpeckers and flying squirrels.

### Protecting species at risk

*The Keyhole (New Brunswick)*

Thanks to the NHCP, NCC staff are completing a survey of the property and assessing the presence of endangered species. As a result of the work of local biologists, NCC confirmed the use of the property by at-risk snapping turtles and eastern wood-pewee, which will help NCC plan for interventions and other actions to help these species thrive on the property.

*Snapping turtle*



### Restoring forests

*Damascus (New Brunswick)*

The NHCP is supporting NCC's implementation of a forest restoration plan for the property. NCC staff opened small patches in the forest and re-planted with a larger diversity and longer-lived trees. This improves the forest's climate resilience and improves habitat for wildlife. The project was completed with help from local contractors, providing a small boost to the local economy.

# Land Trusts Conservation Fund

In communities across Canada, local land trusts are working with donors, volunteers, landowners and supporters to care for natural areas that provide space for wildlife to roam and ecological services like flood protection and clean air and water.

**T**hrough the Land Trusts Conservation Fund (LTCF), the Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP) provides important support to make this happen. The LTCF provides \$4.5 million to land trusts and conservation organizations to work in their communities. NHCP partner Wildlife Habitat Canada administers the funding program, with guidance from the Canadian Land Trust Working Group. In the past year, the NHCP's support resulted in successful conservation projects with 20 land trusts from five provinces. These organizations completed 26 projects, resulting in the protection of nearly 3,500 hectares. These important projects protect natural spaces for wildlife while offering nature-based solutions to support healthy and prosperous communities. Here are two great examples of LTCF projects that illustrate what can be accomplished when neighbours come together to create lasting conservation impact:



Nearly  
**3,500 hectares**  
Total number of hectares conserved

**\$32.7 million**  
Total matching funds raised by land trusts



*Gore, QC*



*Mount Fisher Bluffs, BC*

## Conservation Lakefield

*Gore, QC*

Conservation Lakefield and partners like biologist Mathieu Madison and the Domaine Lakefield homeowners' association secured 117 hectares of Laurentian wilderness. The property features forests, marshes, swamps, peat bogs and a section of the Eastern River and provides habitats for a variety of species, including some at risk. This project will help consolidate the ecological connectivity of the region and protect the biodiversity of the southern Laurentians.



## Nature Trust of British Columbia

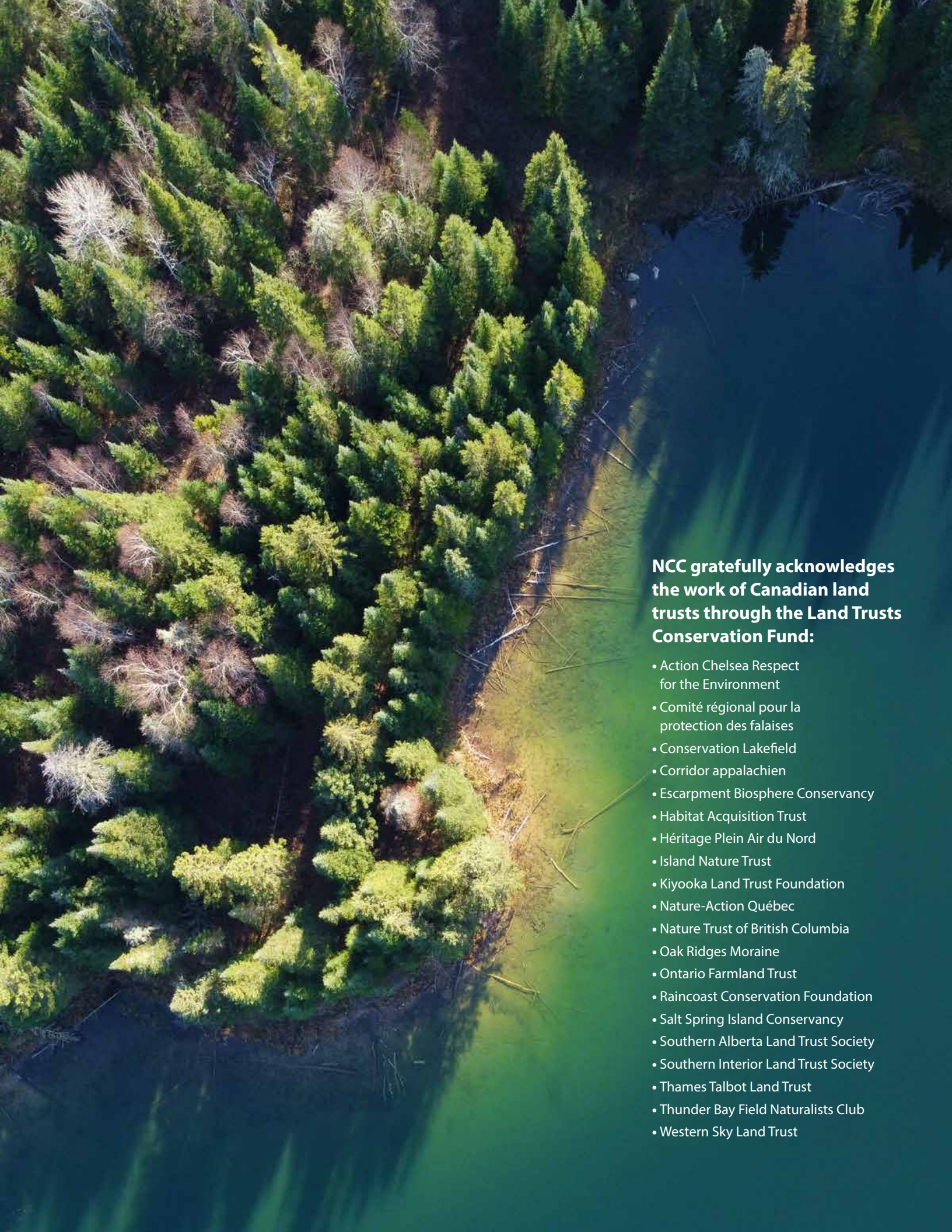
*Saturna Island –*

*Mount Fisher Bluffs, BC*

Thanks in part to the generosity of the community on Saturna Island, the Nature Trust of British Columbia protected more than 30 hectares of ecologically diverse lands on the island. The property features wetlands, shallow-soiled grasslands, herbaceous rocky bluffs, coniferous woodland, mixed woodland and mature coniferous forests that range from 80 to 250 years old. These habitats support at-risk species like barn swallow and slender popcorn-flower.



NATURE TRUST  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

An aerial photograph showing a dense forest of evergreen trees on the left side, with a river or stream flowing through the center and right side. The water is dark and reflects the surrounding greenery. The forest appears to be a mix of mature and younger trees, with some bare branches visible. The overall scene is lush and natural.

**NCC gratefully acknowledges  
the work of Canadian land  
trusts through the Land Trusts  
Conservation Fund:**

- Action Chelsea Respect for the Environment
- Comité régional pour la protection des falaises
- Conservation Lakefield
- Corridor appalachien
- Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy
- Habitat Acquisition Trust
- Héritage Plein Air du Nord
- Island Nature Trust
- Kiyooka Land Trust Foundation
- Nature-Action Québec
- Nature Trust of British Columbia
- Oak Ridges Moraine
- Ontario Farmland Trust
- Raincoast Conservation Foundation
- Salt Spring Island Conservancy
- Southern Alberta Land Trust Society
- Southern Interior Land Trust Society
- Thames Talbot Land Trust
- Thunder Bay Field Naturalists Club
- Western Sky Land Trust



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