



2020–2021 Donor Impact Report

# Ontario



Thank you for supporting the Nature Conservancy of Canada's (NCC) work in Ontario. It is because of you that some of Ontario's most precious habitats, from the north shore of Lake Superior, to Pelee Island in Lake Erie, to Frontenac Arch in eastern Ontario are protected forever. We are pleased to share some of the successes we have achieved together this past year.

*With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge the significant rights and responsibilities of Indigenous Peoples to conserve and steward their traditional territories. Through collaboration and engagement, we can support a network of healthy landscapes that will benefit all of us forever. Places that will be there for future generations. Places that provide an opportunity to connect with the world that is and hope for the world that can be.*

**Nine acquisition projects were completed in Ontario this past year, protecting nearly 8,700 hectares (21,497 acres) of land valued at over \$17.7 million!**

These newly protected areas represent the incredible natural diversity Ontario has to offer, and thanks to donors like you, each is now conserved forever.

Thank you for helping to make these projects a reality, some of the highlights include:

**Rare undeveloped shoreline, upland deciduous forest, savannah, alvar meadow and limestone alvar on the south shore of Prince Edward County.**  
*McMahon Bluff*



**A key piece of the globally important Carden Alvar, containing some of the most significant natural habitat of its kind in the province.**  
*Cedarhurst Alvar*



**Provincially Significant Wetland in Ottawa Valley that provides habitat for over 400 species of flora and fauna.**  
*Alfred Bog*



**More than 18 kilometres of Manitoulin Island shoreline at one of NCC's largest-ever single property acquisitions in Ontario.**  
*Vidal Bay Forests and Shoreline*



# Vidal Bay Forests and Shoreline | Manitoulin Island

**Now protected forever, Vidal Bay Forests and Shoreline is one of NCC's largest single property acquisitions in Ontario at 7,608 hectares (18,800 acres). It contributes to a protected area complex of more than 248 square kilometres of forests, wetlands, and shorelines – the largest area of its kind south of the Canadian Shield in Ontario.**

Vidal Bay Forests and Shoreline is located on Manitoulin Island in the Territory of Zhiibaahaasing First Nation, Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Aundeck Omni Kaning First Nation, Sheguiandah First Nation, Sheshegwaning First Nation, and Whitefish River First Nation. With gratitude and respect, we acknowledge the significant, ongoing role of Indigenous Peoples on these lands and look forward to working together to ensure these natural lands can continue to support the people with whom they are intertwined.

This \$16-million conservation project was completed with an extremely short timeline during a global pandemic. This large landscape-scale conservation project would not have been possible without the incredible generosity of people like you. We are grateful to our team of donors, volunteers, and staff who embraced this opportunity during these unprecedented times.

The success of this project has set a new standard of large, landscape-scale conservation in Ontario. It has redefined the vision of wildlife corridors in the province, creating a shore-to-shore, continuous stretch of wilderness in an area where projects of this magnitude are rare. The property's features provide essential ecosystem services and will help combat the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss.



This property captures 22,675 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e per year, equivalent to the carbon emissions from the electricity used by more than 4,000 homes each year



This project protected more than 76 square kilometres of forest, wetlands and shoreline.



Vidal Bay Forests and Shoreline, Manitoulin Island, Ontario

JAMIN HUDSON

# Caring for the Land

**Acquiring land is just one part of our work to protect Canada’s most important natural areas. Every property we protect is monitored and managed so that healthy ecosystems are maintained and native species thrive – even if that means leaving it be sometimes.**

Thanks to continued support from donors like you, we’ve been able to continue caring for the lands we’ve worked so hard to protect. During the field season, we restored native habitat, managed invasive species, installed signs and fencing, maintained trails, and monitored at-risk and rare plants and animals.

Prior to the pandemic, staff relied on big public volunteer events to help with some of this on-the-ground work. With ongoing restrictions on non-essential and large group gatherings, we have pivoted our volunteer engagement to focus on a new, formalized Property Stewards program. Property Stewards work closely with staff to take care of NCC properties. This year alone, 40 Property Stewards contributed over 850 hours to help monitor properties, remove garbage, install signage and trail markers, manage invasive species, and conduct other essential work.

*“Despite our Conservation Volunteers program being cancelled for the year, in 2020 we were able to enlist the help of some volunteers virtually. In NCC’s Ontario Region, we had a few volunteers complete placements with us through their post-secondary programs. They helped our GIS team with projects, including creating maps and updating databases, as well as helping our field staff with important data entry. While some of this work may seem less glamorous than getting out in the field and getting your hands dirty, these behind-the-scenes tasks are critical to our work. We are so appreciative of the time you were able to dedicate to volunteering with NCC!”*

- Katherine Culbert, acting conservation coordinator, Ontario Region



NEILEVER OSBORNE

Volunteer planting native grass



BRENT SINCLAIR

Garlic mustard removal on Pelee Island



CHELSEA MARCANTONIO

Purple loosestrife removal on the Rice Lake Plains

# Connecting People to Nature

**Now more than ever people are looking for ways to connect with the natural world.**

This was evident in the significant increase in visitors on NCC properties in the past year. It has been incredible to see more people getting outside and connecting with nature, demonstrating just how important nature is for our mental and physical wellbeing. Increases in visitors does come with some challenges, however, including trespassing, vandalism, off-leash dogs, and littering. We are working in Ontario and across Canada to ensure that that everyone can keep enjoying our trails safely, and that the habitats and species these properties sustain remain protected.

Throughout the year we continued to engage people through virtual programming. We transformed some of our popular in-person annual events into a virtual format, engaging over 3,900 participants in 70 events across the province. NCC also hosted our second virtual cross-country Big Backyard BioBlitz. In five days, over 1,700 people contributed to community science and made over 36,000 observations on iNaturalist!

While we all look forward to the time when we can get together in-person again, virtual events have allowed us to reach a wider audience and engage people who may not have been able to attend in-person events before.

**For information on upcoming events, visit [natureconservancy.ca/events](https://natureconservancy.ca/events).**



DAVID COULSON

Hugging a tree in Happy Valley Forest Ontario

## ENGAGING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Through collaboration and partnerships with private landowners, governments, and Indigenous nations and communities, we can achieve great conservation outcomes.

### Private Land Partnership Program



STALEY POIMT; SPENCER WYNN

The majority of land in southern Ontario is under private ownership. With support from donors and partners, we are exploring ways to enhance opportunities to encourage and help landowners undertake habitat stewardship and restoration activities on their own lands through a pilot program in Prince Edward County and Rice Lake Plains. The aim is to create a model that NCC and other land trusts can use that will significantly increase overall conservation outcomes, while also engaging with landowners in discussions about long-term conservation options.

### Grassland enhancement project at the Mohawk Airport



MONARCH; GERRY KAISER

NCC staff are working with Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and the First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) on a grassland enhancement project at the Mohawk Airport. This area provides habitat for many grassland species-at-risk including bobolink, meadowlark, and monarch. This project aims to diversify the landscape and eliminate invasive species, allowing even more native species to thrive. We are also exploring other opportunities to work with the school to support integrating conservation and stewardship work into an academic stream.

# Inspiring the Conservation Leaders of Tomorrow

**We invest in the next generation of conservation professionals through the Conservation Internship Program. This year, 22 interns joined us across Ontario. They grew their skills through controlling invasive species, restoring habitat, monitoring properties, maintaining trails and boardwalks, assisting with GIS mapping, and conducting biological inventories of NCC properties.**

This year, we also hosted 12 volunteers from the Canadian Wildlife Federation's Canadian Conservation Corps program. These volunteers supported our stewardship teams in the field, and in most cases this provided these youth with their first experience working in the conservation sector.

Conservation interns are vital to our stewardship efforts. They help ensure we can continue to care for the land and act as ambassadors in the communities where we live and work. We are so grateful to the donors who support this program – your investment in these young professionals is helping inspire the future of conservation!

"I came to NCC from a city life with nothing but a deep appreciation for nature. Now, I feel that I can not only ID various plants, but I have a deeper appreciation for the biodiversity and lush nature outside the city. The way everything in our ecosystem works as one to thrive is beautiful."  
– Isabelle Roy



Conservation Intern leading a hike through Happy Valley Forest

# Looking Ahead

## **Thank you for working with us to protect Canada's biodiversity, now and into the future.**

In late 2020, NCC completed the Landmark Campaign and surpassed our goal of raising \$750 million – the largest campaign for conservation in Canada's history! Thanks to the collective effort of donors, volunteers, staff, and partners, 540 new conservation sites were protected from coast to coast to coast, with over 100 projects within Ontario. Thank you for leaving your landmark by being a part of this historic effort to protect Canada's biodiversity, now and into the future.

The next ten years will be the world's decision decade for nature. Together, by continuing to accelerate the pace of conservation, we can shift the course of the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss in Canada and have an unparalleled impact at a national and global scale.

Spurred by the success of the Vidal Bay project, NCC is pursuing more opportunities for large, landscape-scale projects. Conserving large landscapes is about much more than the land or the plants and animals they support. The co-benefits of protecting these lands, from carbon capture to avoided peatland conversion to wildlife conservation to opportunities to support Indigenous-led conservation, are immense. Conservation at this scale is becoming increasingly important in our collective efforts to manage our carbon footprint.

One of our current priorities is the Hastings Wildlife Junction, a massive conservation project south of Bancroft. Hastings Wildlife Junction presents an amazing opportunity to protect and care for 5,000 hectares (12,000 acres) of significant forests and wetlands. Located at the junction of the Algonquin to Adirondacks and The Land Between corridors, a project of this magnitude and ecological significance is incredibly rare in southern Ontario. The property's features provide essential ecosystem services and will help slow the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss. To learn more about this project and how you can help, visit [natureconservancy.ca/hastings](https://natureconservancy.ca/hastings).

In addition, we are currently fundraising to protect Town Island in Lake of the Woods, working to protect additional land, and continuing our restoration and public engagement efforts across the province. Please visit [natureconservancy.ca/ontario](https://natureconservancy.ca/ontario) or contact us to learn more.

**Through your continued support and commitment to conservation, you are helping to make a difference to combat climate change and biodiversity loss – thank you!**



Hastings Wildlife Junction, Ontario

CHELSEA MARCANTONIO



Thank you for your support  
to protect Canada's biodiversity,  
now and into the future.

**If you have any questions about our work in Ontario,  
please do not hesitate to be in touch.  
We'd love to hear from you!**

**Pia Kaukoranta Vahabi**

*Acting Director of Development & Communications*

1.877.231.3552 x2222

[pia.vahabi@natureconservancy.ca](mailto:pia.vahabi@natureconservancy.ca)

Nature Conservancy of Canada  
245 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 410  
Toronto, ON, Canada M4P 3J1

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is Canada's leading national land conservation organization. A private, non-profit organization, we partner with individuals, corporations, other non-profit organizations and governments at all levels to protect our most important natural treasures – the natural areas that sustain Canada's plants and wildlife. We secure properties (through donation, purchase, conservation agreement and the relinquishment of other legal interests in land) and manage them for the long term. Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to protect 14 million hectares (35 million acres), coast to coast to coast with more than 84,000 hectares (207,000 acres) in Ontario.

**Donate Online today!**

**[natureconservancy.ca/donate](https://natureconservancy.ca/donate)**

Charitable registration #: 11924 6544 RR0001

Cover photo: Canada anemone, Hastings Wildlife Junction

PHOTO: CHELSEA MARCANTONIO