

Refuge

Conserve. Steward. Educate.

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CONSERVATION: The Nature Trust of New Brunswick moves in next to Crabbe Mountain



Crabbe Mountain has a new neighbour. The Nature Trust of New Brunswick has acquired 36 hectares (88 acres) of land within walking distance of the popular ski hill, which has the largest vertical descent in the Maritime provinces.

It includes part of a 10 km trail system, which is a known destination for hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. In appreciation of these popular winter trails, called the Slippery Mitten trails, the newly conserved land has been named Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve.

"We are fortunate to have the Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve in our backyard," says Jordan Cheney, General Manager of Crabbe Mountain. "This area and a new partnership with the Nature Trust of New Brunswick really strengthens our drive and focus on becoming the Maritime's leading outdoor winter activity destination. The Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve has been, and will continue to be, a great system of snowshoe and Nordic ski trails, and we are excited to work with the Nature Trust in developing awareness and use of these trails."

The land was generously donated to the Nature Trust by Earl Brewer to ensure it remains undeveloped and continues to provide outdoor recreational opportunities for the surrounding community and visitors. Since 2001, local residents Brian Clark, a retired paralegal, and Tony Little, a retired forester, have developed and maintained

the trails there, putting hundreds of hours of work into them each year. These two will continue to steward the land.

"Thanks to Earl Brewer's generosity, the Slippery Mitten Trail will continue to be available for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing," says Brian Clark, Slippery Mitten steward. "I get a kick out of seeing people using the trail and it makes all the hard work worthwhile."

While the Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve is better recognized for its recreational significance rather than its ecological significance, the conserved land does provide habitat for an array of common New Brunswick mammals such as moose, white-tailed deer and American red squirrel. The majority of the nature preserve is covered in a mixed-wood forest that has been altered by tree harvesting and agriculture since the 1700s. There is a section of mature forest on the eastern portion of the trail, which includes eastern hemlock and three species of birch — yellow, white and gray birch. As a nature preserve, the forested land will continue to regenerate. More detailed plant and animal surveys will be scheduled in the following years.

Of particular note is the presence of northern flying squirrels in the area, which have been observed at a neighbouring landowner's bird feeder. As a cute, charismatic and somewhat mysterious nocturnal animal, the Nature Trust will aim to do some habitat stewardship and monitoring projects

around the flying squirrel to engage local school groups and draw attention to broader conservation efforts (see education section on page 3 for more information about the Nature Trust's upcoming flying squirrel project).

Other future stewardship plans for Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve include the creation of interpretive signage, as well as the development of a pamphlet for Crabbe Mountain to create more awareness for Slippery Mitten and the Nature Trust.

"This property is close to the hearts of many people who have grown up in the woods of Crabbe Mountain," says Mike Bonga, President of the Nature Trust's Board of Directors. "My own family history and memories started in the early 1960s and our cottage on the hill overlooked what is now the Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve. I've watched the community grow from simple beginnings to a thriving ski and recreation community."

The conservation of Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve would not have been possible without land donor Earl Brewer and financial support from EcoAction and the New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund. We would also like to acknowledge land stewards Brian Clark and Tony Little for all of their support in maintaining the trails and guiding visits to the area. Finally, we would like to thank students from the University of New Brunswick's Master of Environmental Management program for completing a management plan to help guide future stewardship of the area.

"As the area grows, there are developmental pressures on the neighbouring land. Preservation of this land will ensure that the community achieves a conservation legacy to balance development," says Bonga. "I've had the pleasure of skiing through the Slippery Mitten trails and am inspired that this land will be preserved and enjoyed in this way. It's a very special place and meaningful gift by Earl Brewer and the past, present and future stewards of the property."

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STEWARDSHIP: Friends of Ferris Street - creating a legacy for their community



Event participants crossing the Sunset U-Pick berry fields to participate in an outdoor yoga class at the Ferris Street Forest and Wetland Nature Preserve.

Article submitted by: **Richelle Martin,**
Stewardship Coordinator

With a network of over 45 nature preserves across the province, having local volunteer stewards on the ground as the caretakers and experts of these natural spaces is key to ensuring that ecological features are protected and is vital to our work. Each nature preserve has at least one voluntary land steward, with eight having major community involvement in the form of a stewardship group like the “Friends of Ferris Street” in Fredericton. Over the coming years, we will be devoting more time and resources into the development of stewardship groups. This will include increased collaboration with partners and naturalists to offer site specific training workshops to each group, equipping volunteers with the skills necessary to take on the monitoring of their nature preserve, along with some new citizen science projects.

The Friends of Ferris Street is a perfect example of the power that lies in collaborating with a community group that is passionate about conservation. The group came together in 2012 with the common goal to have the Sunset U-Pick berry fields and surrounding forest



Conserved property signs are now up on the Ferris Street Forest and Wetland Nature Preserve.

and wetland protected from development after it had been re-zoned from green space to residential land. Over the next three years, they campaigned and collected over 5000 petition signatures in support of their cause. Last year, we became involved when the City of Fredericton agreed to enter into a 10-year license agreement with us to co-manage the land surrounding the berry fields. This ensures that the land will remain green space for at least the next 10 years, as we work together to create awareness for the area to keep it this way.

Naturally, the Friends of Ferris Street have become the stewardship group for what is now referred to as the Ferris Street Forest and Wetland Nature Preserve — a 30 acre area of mature mixed forest, *Provincially Significant Wetland* and riparian zone with approximately 3 km of walking trails. In the past six months since entering into the agreement with the City, we have received tremendous support and interest from community members. UNB Fredericton’s first year forestry students spent two days on the nature preserve in the fall to complete a forest inventory, an Environmental Management graduate student helped with the development of a management plan, and the Oromocto High School Youth Stewards of the Environment joined us for a tour of the preserve in the fall. A successful public event with over 30 people was held there on the evening of the full moon in February, which included outdoor yoga led by Moksha Yoga Fredericton, a hike, and some owl interpretation by biologist and wildlife photographer Arielle DeMerchant. The Friends of Ferris Street have also been maintaining the trail system, cleaning up garbage and debris, and have been meeting regularly to help in getting the preserve established.

Currently, we are working on completing a trail study with funding received from the Government of New Brunswick’s Trail Infrastructure Fund. Crandall Engineering is taking the lead on the study, which has involved mapping out all of the trails that currently exist on the preserve, hosting an Open House event to get public feedback on some ideas of trail systems that could be established, reaching out to the neighbours of the preserve, and summarizing their findings and recommendations in a report.

At the same time, we are also wrapping up a fundraiser for the preserve, with just \$2,600 remaining to reach our \$20,000 goal for stewardship funds for the property. Specifically, in December and January, we were able to raise close to \$6000 for Ferris Street through an online crowdfunding campaign made possible by Small Change Fund and the Aveda Atlantic Water Fund. This was a fantastic opportunity to raise funds and awareness for the project and was greatly promoted and supported by the Friends of Ferris Street. Thank you to all who contributed to the campaign.

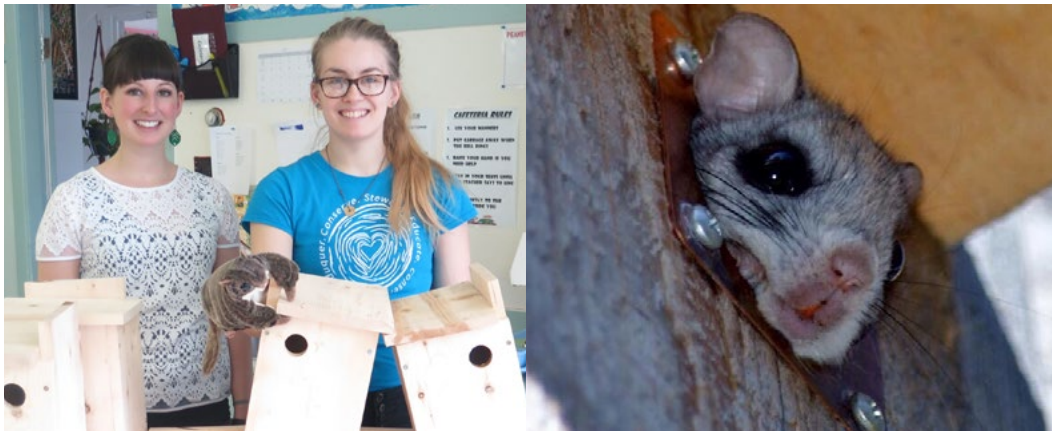
All that has been accomplished over the past six months would not have been possible without the leadership and passion of the Friends of Ferris Street. The group has some exciting plans for the future, including a Grand Opening celebration event in the works for the spring and the development of some new community engagement programming.

We would like to recognize the active members of the Friends of Ferris Street for their hard work and determination over the past four years to secure protection for this special and ecologically significant land: Gretta Wells, Alan & Lucille Haines, Bill Ayer, Wilma Gilchrist, Peggy Bradley, Sandy Meikle, and Leslie McDougall.



Appreciating the large eastern white pine found along the trail system of the preserve.

EDUCATION: Launching the northern flying squirrel project on Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve



Left: Richelle Martin and Kaela Neil at Millville Elementary School after assembling 10 flying squirrel nesting boxes with students. / Right: Northern flying squirrel peeking out of a nesting box (Photo: Diane Chapman).

Polar bears, tigers, lions, pandas, beluga whales. What do all of these animals have in common? These animals have all been **flagship species** or, according to World Wildlife Fund, “iconic animals that provide a focus for raising awareness and stimulating action and funding for broader conservation efforts.” We have all seen these animals and many other iconic species in campaigns, acting as symbols or ambassadors for environmental conservation and stewardship initiatives. Though flagship species may not always be a keystone species in their particular ecosystem, efforts to draw attention to a specific ‘charismatic’ plant or animal for conservation and educational purposes can often help to garner more awareness and interest. Conserving habitat for flagship species can also benefit other species within that same habitat.

The Nature Trust of New Brunswick has worked with several flagship species in the past, which have proven to be successful in growing awareness and support of our conservation efforts. Some of these species include peregrine falcon, cobblestone tiger beetle, and the grey treefrog. The Nature Trust now protects four known and two potential peregrine falcon nesting sites, three islands in the Upper St. John River for the cobblestone tiger beetle, and the Frog Walks at Hyla Park Nature Preserve in search of the grey treefrog and other amphibian species continue to engage hundreds of people every spring and summer. This year, we are embarking on a stewardship project with a new flagship species — the northern flying squirrel (*Glaucomys sabrinus*).

Northern flying squirrels are arboreal, meaning they live in trees, and have been linked with mature forest and healthy forested ecosystems. Fungi is a major food source for the squirrels and certain types of fungi are beneficial for trees, specifically mycorrhizal mushrooms, which form a bond with roots of trees that help them take up nutrients and prevent disease. Mushrooms that fruit below ground are known as truffles and flying squirrels are particularly good at sniffing them out. Once consumed by the squirrel, they spread the spores of these

tree-helping mushrooms throughout the forest by dispersing them in their feces (above information courtesy of Matthew Smith, PhD). While northern flying squirrels are not listed as a species at risk, they have been identified as a target species for the Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) Prevention Stream of funding through Environment Canada. This funding supports projects that will proactively prevent common or currently secure species from becoming a conservation concern. Flying squirrels may not be listed as a species at risk right now, but they rely on mature forests and are threatened by forest habitat loss and fragmentation.

As mentioned in our story about the new Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve, the northern flying squirrel has been spotted in the area. Brought to our attention by a neighbour who has kept an inventory of bird and other wildlife sightings over the years, this information was interesting for staff because they have not previously been officially sighted on our nature preserves. Northern flying squirrels are not as well-known as other squirrel species in the province such as red squirrels and grey squirrels because they are nocturnal and rarely seen. This prompted the idea to develop a habitat stewardship and monitoring project to learn more about the species and engage local students and community members in the process.

To get started, staff connected with Matthew Smith who studied flying squirrel populations in southern NB for his PhD at UNB Fredericton and now works as an Ecologist at Kejimikujik National Park in Nova Scotia. Matthew is a wealth of information about flying squirrels (or “flyers” as he endearingly calls them) and provided the Nature Trust with presentations and other resources to use that he developed through his Fundy Flying Squirrel Project. After developing a relationship with staff and students of the nearby Millville Elementary School, we thought this could be a perfect educational opportunity to engage students in habitat stewardship for these cute, charismatic and interesting nocturnal animals.

Staff member Richelle Martin and volunteer Kaela Neil worked with Fredericton Makerspace to create 10 nesting boxes that could be easily assembled by students. On February 29, they gave a presentation to 30 students about flying squirrels and the new Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve, then students enthusiastically helped put the boxes together. Richelle and Kaela even brought along a new friend — a flying squirrel puppet to introduce to the kids. Thank you to Ian Smith with Parks NB for lending it to us! Later that week, Millville Elementary school staff, students and parents joined the Nature Trust for a field trip to Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve to explore the natural environment on snowshoes and install the nesting boxes. Local stewards Brian Clark and Tony Little helped guide the group and install the boxes for the kids to see. In total, nine nesting boxes were installed on the preserve and the school kept one of the boxes to put up on their local trail system.

“We were so happy with the enthusiasm of the students in learning about flying squirrels and setting up the boxes,” says volunteer Kaela Neil. “Education is key to the ensuring the protection of our natural environment!”

Based on information and expertise from Matthew Smith regarding capturing northern flying squirrels on remote wildlife cameras, we will now embark on the monitoring aspect of the project in fall 2016 using cameras. Whereas flying squirrels are busy gathering food and preparing for the winter, fall has been identified as an ideal time to see the squirrels at camera traps. This is also a wonderful opportunity to see what other critters end up on camera and can help guide future stewardship planning efforts.


Thank you to all who have supported this endeavour so far, including EcoAction, Environmental Trust Fund, Matthew Smith, Ian Smith, Brian Clark, Tony Little, Millville Elementary School and Fredericton Makerspace. We look forward to hopefully catching a glimpse of these adorable, night gliding animals and sharing it with all of you in the coming year.



Steward Brian Clark installing a nesting box on Slippery Mitten Nature Preserve.



Join us for On the Rise 2016!




**THE NATURE TRUST OF NEW BRUNSWICK PRESENTS:
ON THE RISE 2016 —OUR 4TH ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT!**

This year's event features a "Ted Talks" style keynote by Leone Pippard (a NB-based conservation pioneer and sustainable development planner), jazz music from the Don Bossé Quartet, and a LIVE and silent auction.


DATE & TIME: Saturday, April 23, 2016 from 7 to 10 pm
LOCATION: Crowne Plaza Fredericton Lord Beaverbrook
TICKETS: \$50 (includes passed appetizers)

To purchase tickets, call (506) 457-2398, visit the Nature Trust at 404 Queen Street (3rd Floor), or buy online.
 See www.naturetrust.nb.ca for more details.



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- Two issues of our 'Refuge' (print newsletter) and one copy of the Annual Report.
- Monthly e-Newsletter (if email is provided).
- Invitations and encouragement to get involved in field trips, workshops, and other Nature Trust events.
- The right to vote at the Annual General Meeting.
- *NEW* Members are eligible for a 10% discount on gear, rental, and training at COJO Diving – a Fredericton-based scuba diving business.