

Habitat Conservation Plan for the Town of Pouch Cove



Pouch Cove's Northeast Pond. Staff photo

March 2019



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Preface

In the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) some of the wildlife and wildlife habitats that are in greatest danger of being negatively impacted are those found within municipalities. In this province, the primary focus of the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV) is to conserve valuable wildlife habitat through Stewardship Agreements. The Town of Pouch Cove was identified as having ecologically valuable habitat located within its Municipal Planning Area and signed a Stewardship Agreement with the Government of NL on November 20th 2017 to conserve this wildlife habitat.

In accordance with the Stewardship Agreement, the Town of Pouch Cove manages the designated areas with technical advice provided by the provincial Wildlife Division, in part via this Habitat Conservation Plan. With the signing of this plan, both parties accept this Habitat Conservation Plan and will use it to minimize negative impacts on the wildlife habitat.

Plan Objectives

- (1) To present an assessment of the habitats and wildlife species designated for conservation.
- (2) To recommend protection and enhancement strategies which will maintain and/or increase wildlife use in designated conservation areas.
- (3) To describe potential engagement initiatives designed to increase Council and public awareness of the value of 'their' habitat for conserving wildlife.
- (4) To empower Council and municipal residents to conserve these habitats through informed development decision-making with the support of residents.

We agree to work towards implementing this *Habitat Conservation Plan* in the Town of Pouch Cove:

Mayor

Date

Witness

Date

**Department of Fisheries and Land Resources
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador**

Date

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Section 1: Habitat Conservation in Newfoundland and Labrador

Human development has resulted in the destruction or alteration of many types of habitat all over the world. The number and diversity of North America's wildlife species has been declining over the latter half of the twentieth century. Natural habitats are regularly lost to urban, industrial, and agricultural expansion.

Recognizing that habitat conservation could help increase waterfowl populations, in 1986 Canada and the United States (later followed by Mexico) signed the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP, nawmp.wetlandnetwork.ca). This committed us to a long-term partnership to protect wetland habitats. 'Joint ventures' were established across North America to achieve the objectives of NAWMP. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) committed to its participation in the **Eastern Habitat Joint Venture** (EHJV) in 1989.

Today, **EHJV** (ehjv.ca) partners continue to conserve, enhance, and restore wildlife habitat for all birds found across the six eastern Canadian provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI, and NL. Each province implements the partnership slightly differently, with each provincial program coordinated by a separate program manager and involving the cooperation of international partners, including government agencies and non-governmental conservation groups. In NL, the program is administered by the provincial Department of Fisheries and Land Resources (Wildlife Division). Other NL partners include SAM (Stewardship Association of Municipalities), Ducks Unlimited Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service (a branch of Environment and Climate Change Canada), and Nature Conservancy of Canada.

As its primary contribution to the EHJV in NL, the provincial Department of Fisheries and Land Resources created a habitat stewardship program to help municipalities conserve important wildlife habitat found within their planning boundaries. Stewardship Agreements are signed with municipalities so that when land use decisions are made, wildlife habitat will not be forgotten. Since 1993, over forty municipalities have signed Habitat Stewardship Agreements in NL. Having now signed its own Stewardship Agreement, the Town of Pouch Cove protects an important link in a network of conservation areas in NL and indeed, across North America.



Map of signed Habitat Stewardship Agreements in NL

Roles of Stewardship Agreement Signatories

The Province: The NL Department of Fisheries and Land Resources, through its Wildlife Division, are expected to:

- Write a Habitat Conservation Plan in consultation with the Town (this plan)
- Work with the town to review any developments which are proposed within the Management Units (Conservation Areas).
- Support Council and local groups in implementing the Stewardship Agreement and Habitat Conservation Plan (often with the partners of the NL Eastern Habitat Joint Venture). This includes assisting with wildlife and habitat conservation education, restoration, or enhancement projects such as those discussed in Section 4.

The Town: The Town of Pouch Cove and its Mayor and Council are expected to:

- Incorporate the Stewardship Agreement and Habitat Conservation Plan into the Town's next Municipal Plan (**see Section 3a**)
- Protect the Management Units (Conservation Areas) from destruction or degradation. The town must contact the NL EHJV Program Manager at the Wildlife Division (contact info on Page 2) in a timely manner to allow a 30 day written review of proposed development activities (**see Section 3b, c**)
- Implement, over time, the Habitat Conservation Plan in the community with the assistance of the NL EHJV partners (see **Section 3 b, c, d, e, and Section 4**)
- Educate residents, staff and development planners about the agreement, the Habitat Conservation Plan and their respective responsibilities in relation to it (**Section 3 b, c, d, e and Section 4**)
- Participate in SAM (Stewardship Association of Municipalities Inc- see **Section 3f**)

Section 2: Conservation Areas in Pouch Cove



Legend

-  Management Unit
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Major roads
-  Minor roads
-  Local roads
-  Water bodies



Projection Information
WGS 84 EPSG: 3857
Nov 14th 2017

Summary

Pouch Cove is a municipality of 2069 people located at the northern tip of the Northeast Avalon. Beginning in summer 2011, staff visited Pouch Cove to conduct field work and deliver presentations to Council. During these field surveys, several important wildlife habitat areas were identified, surveyed, and described in the Habitat Stewardship Proposal. With minor modifications to their boundaries, they have now been included under your Stewardship Agreement.

Pouch Cove is home to large numbers of waterfowl (such as American Black Duck, Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, Red-breasted Merganser), seabirds (Common Eider, Atlantic Puffin, Black Guillemot, Dovekie), shorebirds (such as Black-bellied Plover, Purple Sandpiper, Spotted Sandpiper) and many species of passerine birds (White-winged Crossbill, Pine Siskin, waxwings, warblers, Tree Swallow, sparrows, and more). A variety of Species at Risk can be found as well, including Harlequin Duck and Red Crossbill.

In addition to the wildlife surveys done by our staff, numerous eBird Hotspots show continuously updating lists of birds in Pouch Cove. The most frequently used Hotspot is the general one for the town (73 different species of birds at the time of writing) at ebird.org/hotspot/L1461831. Section 4 shows you how to add to these lists.

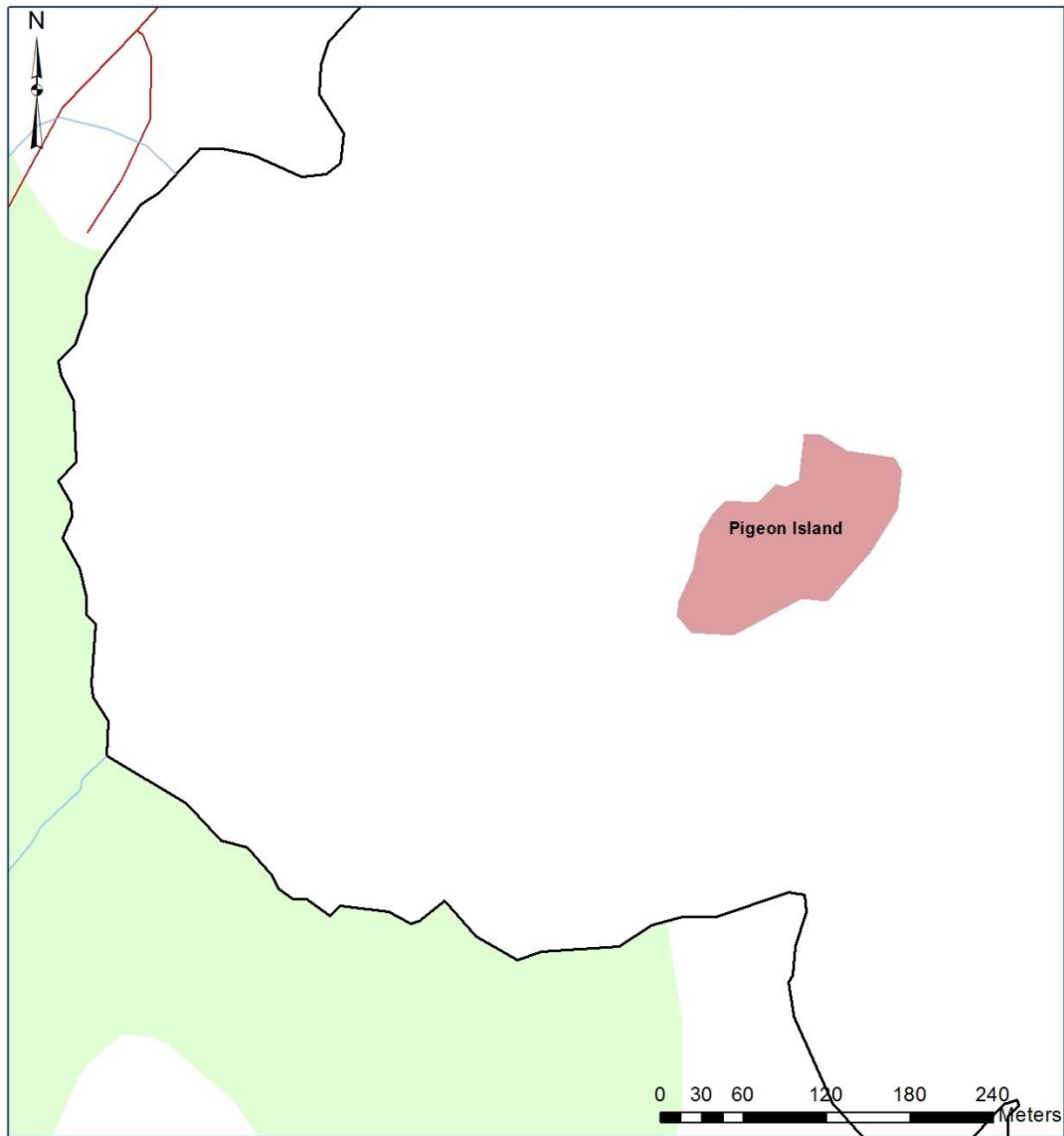
Pigeon Island Management Unit

Pigeon Island is a rocky island located in Biscayan Bay. Topographically it is similar to the coastline adjacent, but vegetation is rare and is limited to lichens and mosses. A number of seabird colonies occur within the broader Avalon Peninsula. These colonies consist of Atlantic puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), Leach's storm-petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*), Black-legged kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) and other common species like Herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) and Great black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*). Pigeon Island was recommended by council and the Pouch Cove public as valuable seabird habitat, and for that reason it has been incorporated into this plan.



Pigeon Island Management Unit (staff photo)

Pigeon Island Management Unit



Legend

- Management Unit
- water
- roads
- municipal boundaries
- buildings
- wetlands
- wooded



EHJV
Eastern Habitat Joint Venture



**Newfoundland
Labrador**

Projection Information: NAD 83

These maps contain spatial layers that have not been formally adopted by the Pouch Cove Town Council or the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Town Council is ultimately responsible to ensure that all privately held land is excluded from management units.

December, 2015

Pouch Cove Northeast Pond Management Unit

This Management Unit is located west off of the main road to Cape St. Francis and includes the pond, a 100 meter buffer surrounding the pond, and the small pond and bog to the southwest.

During field surveys conducted by Wildlife Division staff, a number of bird species were observed utilizing the area, including a bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), American robins (*Turdus migratorius*), black-capped chickadees (*Poecile atricapilla*), and blue jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*). Although there were no waterfowl observed at the time of the survey the area provides excellent nesting and staging habitat for a number of species.

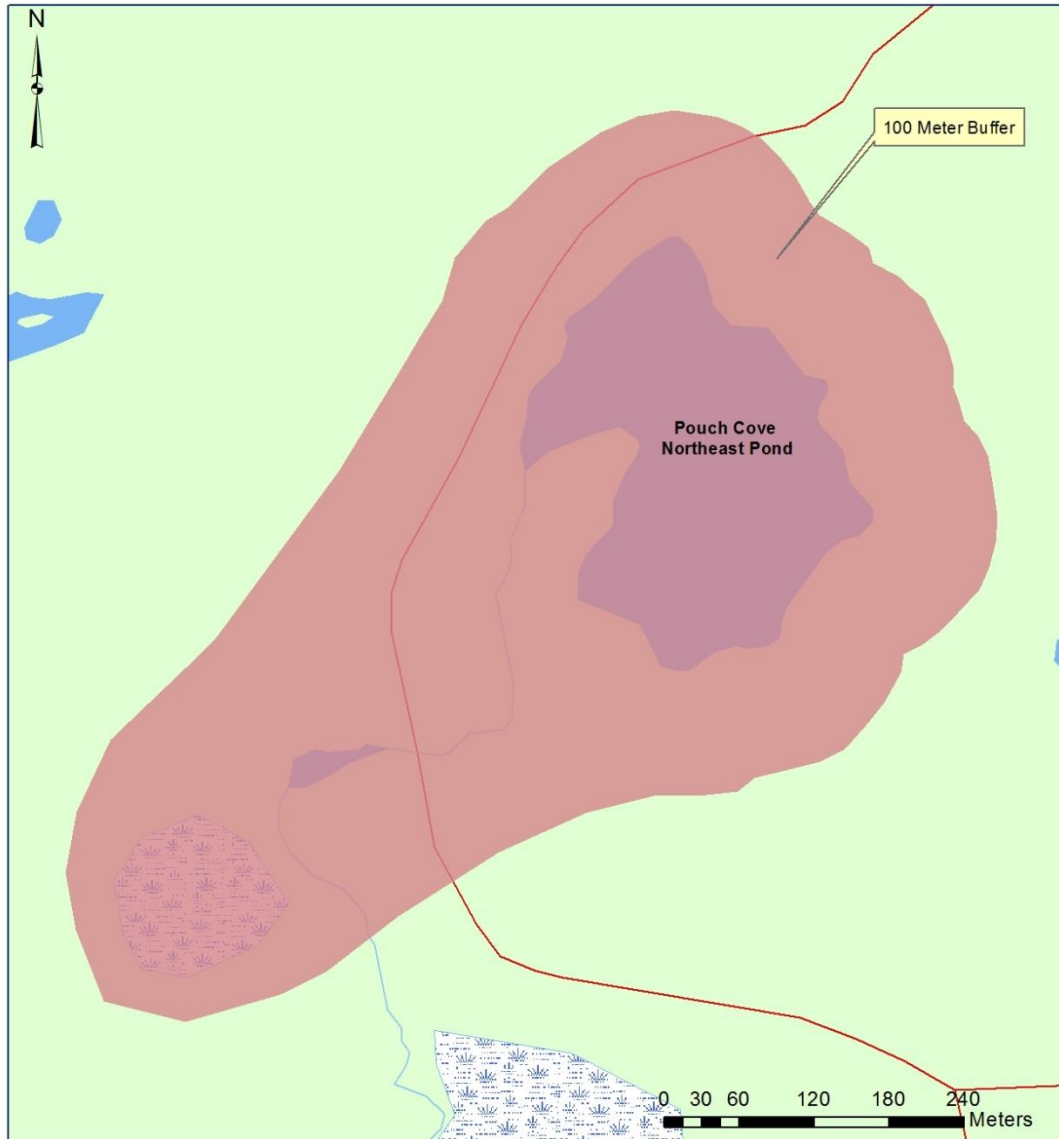
The vegetation adjacent to the pond consists of common softwood species including balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) and black spruce (*Picea mariana*), with larch (*Larix laricina*) scattered throughout. Other vegetation in the area include common shrubs, plants and low growing herbaceous species, including sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), leather leaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*) northeastern rose (*Rosa nitida*), Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*) and a variety of sedge and grass species surrounding the pond, which provide food for a number of species.



Photo by: Wildlife Division

Management Unit: Pouch Cove Northeast Pond

Pouch Cove Northeast Pond Management Unit



Legend

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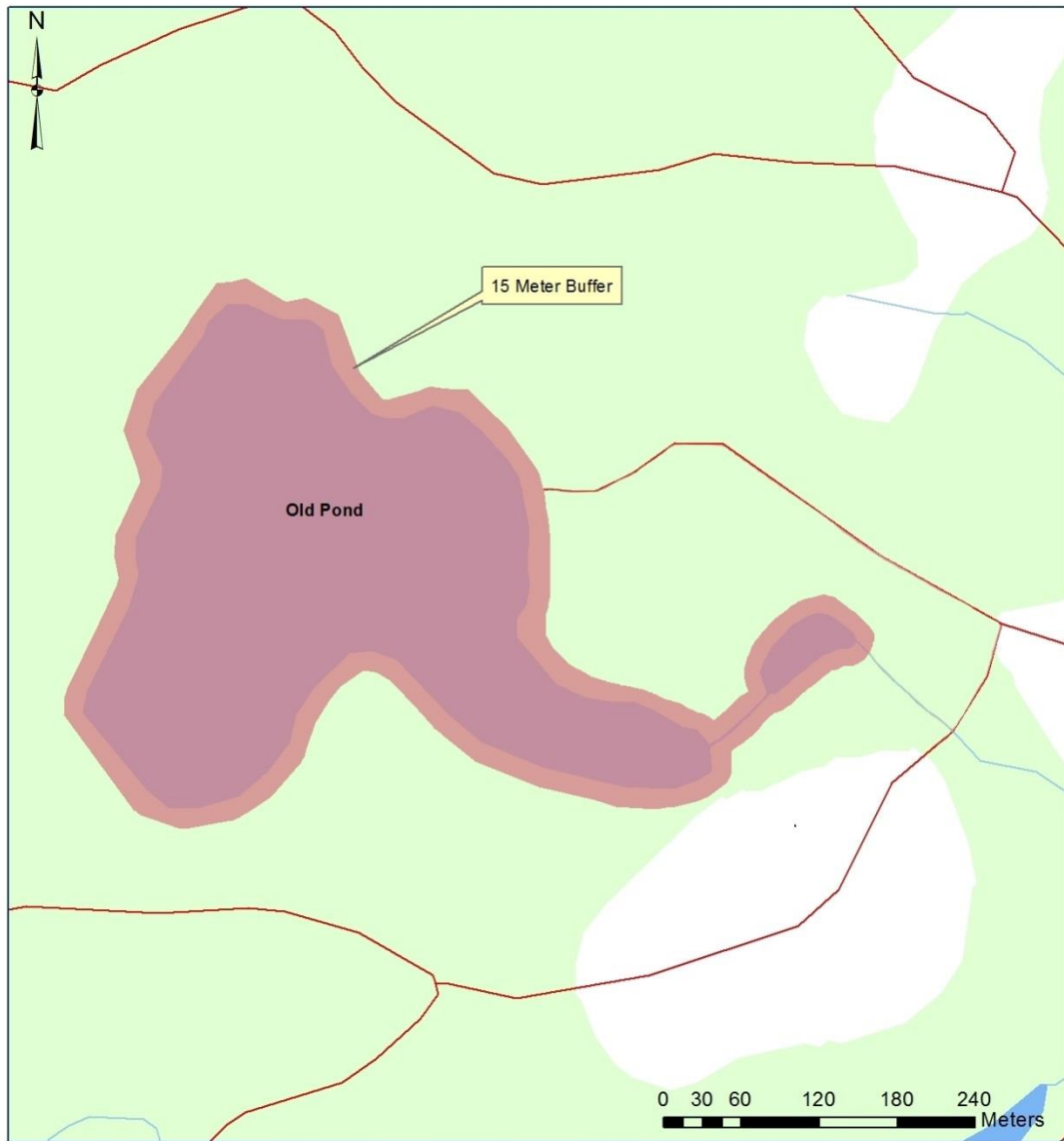
Old Pond Management Unit

The Old Pond Management Unit can be accessed via Noseworthys Hill, which branches westward off of Main Road and transitions into an increasingly narrow gravel lane, then trail, as it approaches the pond. The Management Unit includes Old Pond and a smaller pond to the east, with a 15 meter buffer surrounding both ponds as well as the stream connecting the two.

The ecosystem in and around Old Pond is similar to that of Northeast Pond, and includes wetland and upland habitat for observed bird species including bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), American robins (*Turdus migratorius*), black-capped chickadees (*Poecile atricapilla*), blue jays (*Cyanocitta cristata*), and likely a variety of waterfowl during nesting and staging, although none were observed during the field inspection conducted by staff of the Wildlife Division.

The vegetation adjacent to the pond is typical of the Northeastern Maritime Barrens Ecoregion, and is dominated by balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) and black spruce (*Picea mariana*), with larch (*Larix laricina*) occurring less frequently throughout. Common shrubs, plants and low growing herbaceous species, including sweet gale (*Myrica gale*), leather leaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), northeastern rose (*Rosa nitida*), Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*) and a variety of sedge and grass species surrounding the pond, provide food, cover, and shelter for a number of species.

Old Pond Management Unit



Legend

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Coastal Conservation Area Management Unit

The Town of Pouch Cove has a unique shoreline with steep coastlines and rock cliffs. This area includes coastal portions of the areas designated as Open Space Conservation in the Municipal Plan. The shoreline of the Town spans over 25 kilometers from the outlet of Half Moon Brook to the outflow of Crow Head Pond.

Balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) is the dominant tree species in this area with areas of dense thickets of Mountain alder (*Alnus crispa*) along edges of brooks. Sheep laurel (*Kalmia angustifolia*) and rhodora (*Rhododendron canadense*) also occur within sheltered valleys. A number of seabird colonies occur within the southeastern region of the Avalon Peninsula. These colonies consist of Atlantic puffin (*Fratercula arctica*), Leach's storm-petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*), Black-legged kittiwake (*Rissa tridactyla*) and other common species like Herring gull (*Larus argentatus*) and Great black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*). In forested regions of this area Ruby-crowned kinglet (*Regulus calendula*), Northern waterthrush (*Parus noveboracensis*), White-throated sparrow (*Zonotrichia albicollis*), Hermit thrush (*Catharus guttatus*), Fox sparrow (*Passerella iliaca*), Yellow-rumped warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) occur as migratory breeders. Dark-eyed junco (*Junco hyemalis*), Pine grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*), and the Endangered Red crossbill (*Loxia curvirostra percna*) are all residents in this habitat.

The Town of Pouch Cove currently has a portion of the coastal region zoned as Open Space Conservation and, as per the Town's Municipal Plan, supports the preservation of this coastal region in partnership with the East Coast Trail Association. The coastal area currently has a policy in place to maintain the integrity of the coastline within the Town and that the area would be reserved primarily for passive recreational uses such as fishing, hiking, and skiing.



Shoreline in Pouch Cove

Shoe Cove Pond, Peyton's Pond, & Grog Pond Management Unit

This Management Unit is located west off Pouch Cove highway (Route 20) and consists of three ponds; Shoe Cove Pond, Peyton's Pond and Grog Pond. The Shoe Cove Pond portion of the Management Unit includes the pond and a 15 meter buffer that surrounds it. The Management Unit then extends to include wetlands south of Shoe Cove Pond and portions of two streams flowing into it. The Management Unit also encompasses Peyton's Pond and Grog Pond, each with a 50 meter buffer, as well as the treed and wetland habitat adjoining them.

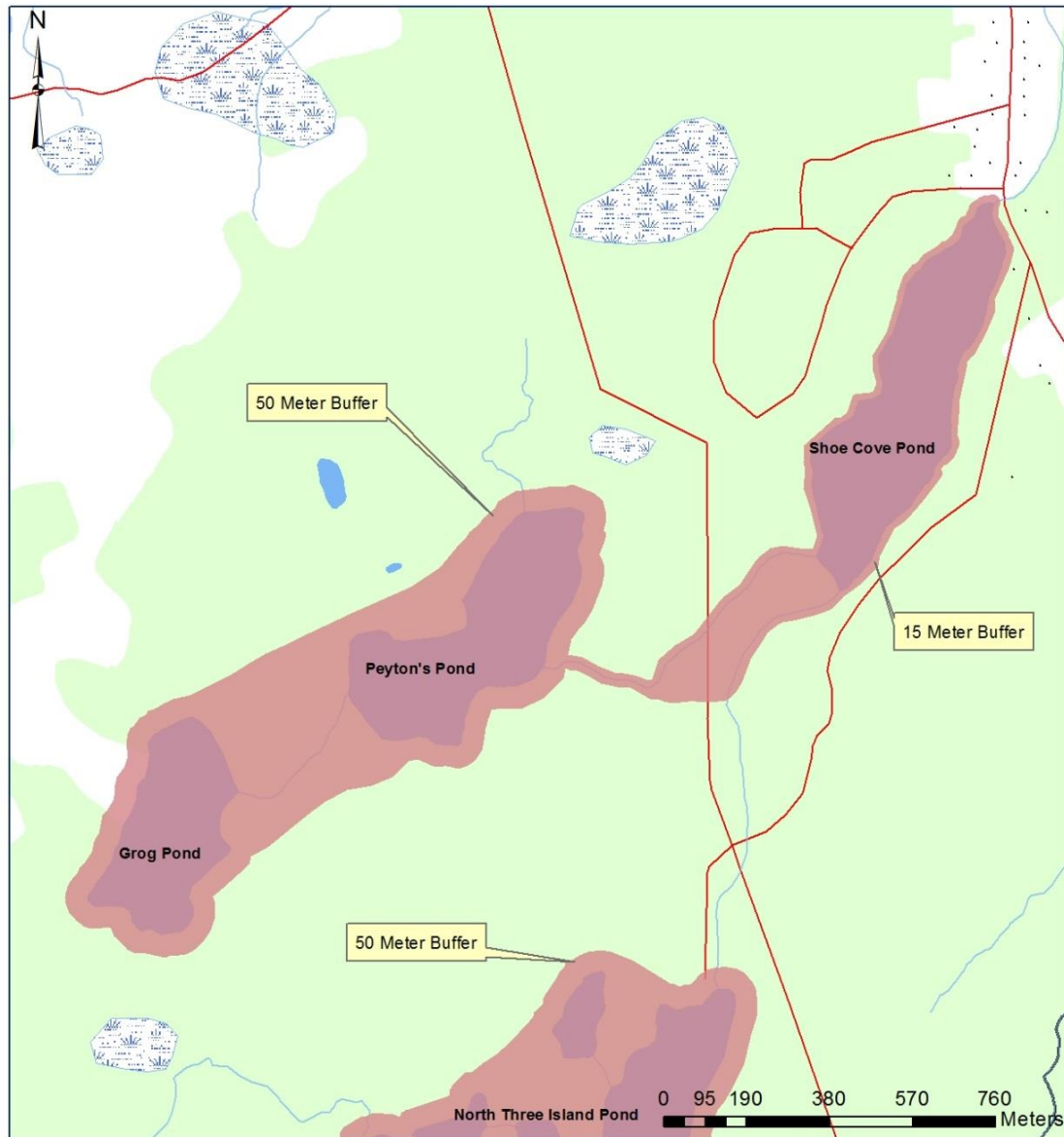
These areas were recognized and identified as having significant wildlife habitat supporting a variety of species, including owls, songbirds, birds of prey, and many mammalian species. The area also contains shallow wetlands containing emergent pond vegetation, ideal for feeding, nesting, and brood rearing waterfowl, including American black ducks (*Anas rubripes*) which were observed in the area.



Photo by: Wildlife Division

Shoe Cove Pond looking south.

Shoe Cove Pond, Peyton's Pond, and Grog Pond



Legend

- Management Unit
- water
- roads
- municipal boundaries
- buildings
- wetlands
- wooded



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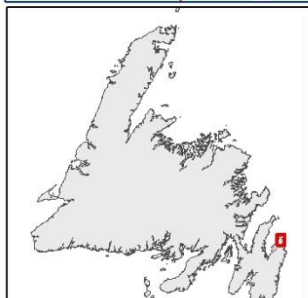
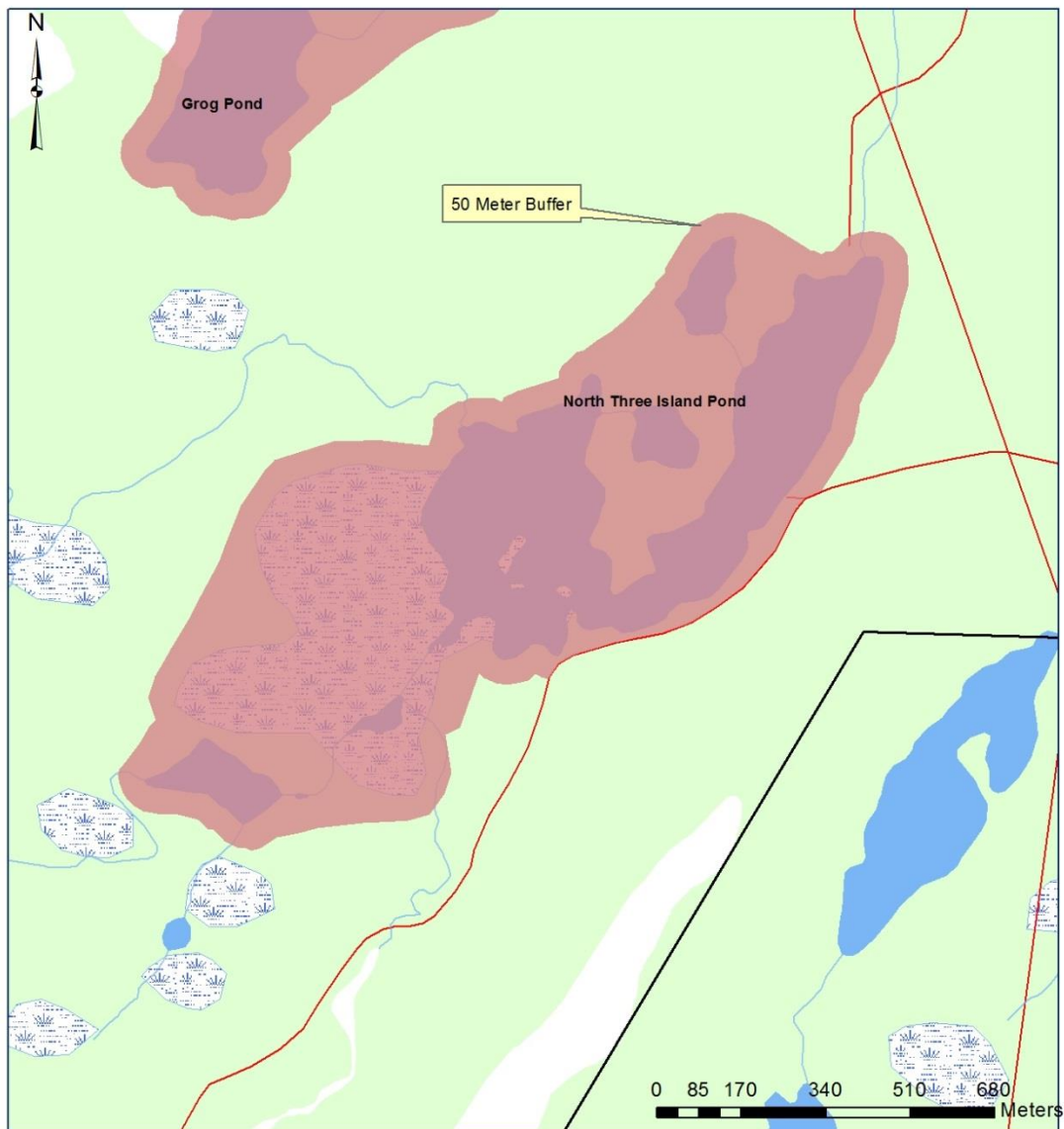
December, 2015

North Three Island Pond Management Unit

This Management Unit is located west off Pouch Cove highway (Route 20) and just south of Peyton's Pond. This area includes at least four highly productive ponds and a variety of other wetlands, including a number of fens and bogs. This large water system spans over 1.5 kilometers and nearly half a kilometer in width and is a protected Watershed Area for the Town of Pouch Cove with activities limited to passive recreation such as hiking. Motorized boats and other vehicles are prohibited. As such, designating this area a Management Unit is a complementary fit, and boundaries correspond with the existing Watershed Area. It is recognized that the Town of Pouch Cove utilizes this area for its water supply and that the Town's Water Treatment plant intake is located at the northeastern portion of the management unit. The stewardship agreement is not intended to interfere with those operations and ongoing maintenance.

Vegetation in this area is much the same as the other Management Units which include ponds. The area consists mostly of common softwood species including balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) and black spruce (*Picea mariana*), with larch (*Larix laricina*) scattered throughout. Other vegetation include common shrubs, plants and low growing herbaceous species, as well as a variety of sedge and grass species, which provide food for many wildlife species.

North Three Island Pond Management Unit



Legend

- Management Unit
- water
- roads
- municipal boundaries
- buildings
- wetlands
- wooded



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Section 3: Policies for Habitat Conservation

a. Incorporate your Stewardship Agreement into your Municipal Plan

During the preparation of any draft Municipal Plan, or during the process of a future Municipal Plan Review or development regulations, the Town Council will incorporate the Stewardship Agreement into any resulting Municipal Plan or related Master Plan. The Management Units (Conservation Areas) **shall be zoned Open Space Conservation, Environmental Conservation, Open Space Recreation**, or some similar consistent zoning designation within any future municipal planning documents as governed by the Urban and Rural Planning Act (2000).

b. Refer all possible developments to the Wildlife Division

Activities within the Management Units will be managed whereby permitted activities do not result in the loss of wildlife habitat or wildlife populations. As such, conservation will be at the forefront of management decisions. When council reviews/approves permits, regulations, developments or by-laws which could affect the Management Units (Conservation Areas), **Council will first consult with the NL EHJV Program Manager (709 637 2013)** at the Wildlife Division, Department of Fisheries and Land Resources providing a 30 day notice period.

c. Keep riparian buffer areas intact

Riparian buffers are strips of untouched land surrounding wetlands, lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams. They are composed of trees, shrubs, grasses, cattails, and sedges and provide for a high level of wildlife use, as corridors for travel, for protection from predators, and against inclement weather. Healthy riparian areas filter and reduce surface water runoff from upland areas by trapping sediment and filtering out excess nutrients, pesticides and bacteria. Vegetation in riparian areas affects how readily water enters soil and has a positive effect on replenishing of local groundwater. They also serve to anchor soil with roots, helping to build stream banks and prevent erosion and help control flood levels.

Fish habitat quality is strongly influenced by the amount of riparian edge left along shorelines. Treed buffers provide shade and help keep water temperatures down, impact water quality, and provide spawning and rearing areas for fish and nesting areas for waterfowl. They provide food for wildlife when leaves, insects, and larvae drop into the water body off surrounding trees and shrubs.

Restoration projects can rebuild damaged riparian areas; Section 4 contains contact information for professionals with experience in environmental restoration and the SAM guide to plants for restoration projects is at samnl.org/restore-habitat

The province, via the provincial Lands Act – Section 7(1), requires a crown land reserve (sometimes called an easement or buffer) of 15 metres along all water bodies greater than 1 metre in width and the maintenance of permanent riparian areas next to all watercourses, although there are exceptions allowed under the Act. The town should build awareness of and adherence to this crown land reserve designation by all residents and businesses. This means, unless granted under the Lands Act, that lawns should not extend right down to the water, parking lots should not extend right up to the water, etc. The natural vegetation must be left in place. The 15 metre is the minimum protection around all waterbodies and marsh areas and is critical within the Management Units (Conservation Areas).



Healthy riparian buffers surrounding an urban stream in the autumn. Staff photo.

d. Form a committee

We recommend that the Town of Pouch Cove establish a committee of local volunteers that can help you carry out some of the initiatives described in this plan. This could be called a Wildlife Committee, *Environment and Trails Committee*, *Advisory Committee on the Environment*, or *Habitat Committee* but you are free to choose the name that suits your town and residents best. Usually these committees are chaired by a Council member, which helps this group maintain their connection to the Town.

Sometimes an existing Recreation Committee or Trails Committee takes the lead on projects relating to the Stewardship Agreement. In our experience a dedicated committee can raise the profile of the habitat conserved by your agreement and increase public support. You may also choose to reserve a spot in the group for a younger person, a high school student, or both.

These committees can organize events, apply for grants, conduct cleanups and other projects, host hikes and walks, and many other activities including those described in Section 4.

e. Understand Fish and Wildlife Enforcement

A Stewardship Agreement does not affect hunting, trapping, or fishing rights; where these activities are safe and legal in a certain area, they will remain that way after designation. However, many municipalities are (rightly) concerned about hunting and fishing activities that fall outside what is safe or legal no matter where they take place.

Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Officers can enforce regulations and can be contacted 24/7 at 1 877 820 0999. They can deal with a wide variety of other wildlife-related enforcement issues and are a good contact for poaching issues, hunting in inappropriate areas, and illegal hunting. Your closest office in St. John's (21 Hallett Crescent) can be contacted at 709 729 2192 or 709 729 2348.

For enforcement officers to fully understand the problem and to be able to pursue a case, it is helpful to provide specific details. Without these details, it can be difficult for enforcement officers to properly follow up. Our form (**Appendix 1**) can be used to document possible wildlife enforcement issues. It can be used by Council or by residents, provided in printed copies to residents at meetings and events, and kept at the Town Hall for easy access. Developed with enforcement officers, this form may help your Council or residents to record possible problems with wildlife or habitat.

Enforcing regulations such as these can be complicated, especially where federal/provincial jurisdiction overlaps, and different species are covered by different laws. Partnering with enforcement officers to ensure accuracy, SAM has produced a guide about conservation and enforcement issues at [**samnl.org/enforcement**](http://samnl.org/enforcement).

f. Participate in SAM

Since the Town of Pouch Cove has signed a Habitat Stewardship Agreement with the province, it is a member of SAM (Stewardship Association of Municipalities, samnl.org). SAM is an incorporated non-profit organization whose member municipalities together conserve, enhance, and restore important wildlife habitat. SAM represents its members on conservation issues. SAM maintains a public page about your agreement at samnl.org/pouchcove featuring maps, photos, facts, and information on local attractions. Please link to this page from your town's website; this will help increase residents' understanding of the Stewardship Agreement, your areas, and our programs.

SAM meets each spring (May or June) and fall (September or October) with host municipalities rotating among members and regions. Identify a representative of your town (mayor, councillor, staff, or involved resident) to attend at least one of these meetings per year. This connects you to like-minded municipalities and link you to resources and training. Municipalities also enjoy hosting meetings for the exposure it provides for their wildlife habitat and associated projects.



Field trip at a recent SAM meeting in Grand Falls-Windsor. Staff photo

Existing land uses & potential impacts

Fishing

Most ponds in Pouch Cove can be accessed by trails and are popular with anglers. Since waterfowl are easily disturbed during the nesting and brood rearing period (May to mid-June), both resident and visiting anglers can help conservation by avoiding them. During the nesting period adult waterfowl will often abandon their nest if disturbed, and broods are very susceptible to predation when left unattended. Avoid nesting sites when working or playing around water.

Private land (Issued Crown Land)

There are several known overlapping parcels of issued Crown land surrounding although some portions fall into the Crown Lands 15m setback from the waters edge. Two of the potentially problematic parcels are shown below. By signing the Stewardship Agreement, the Town of Pouch Cove has committed to ensuring that these overlapping lands could be appropriately zoned for conservation.



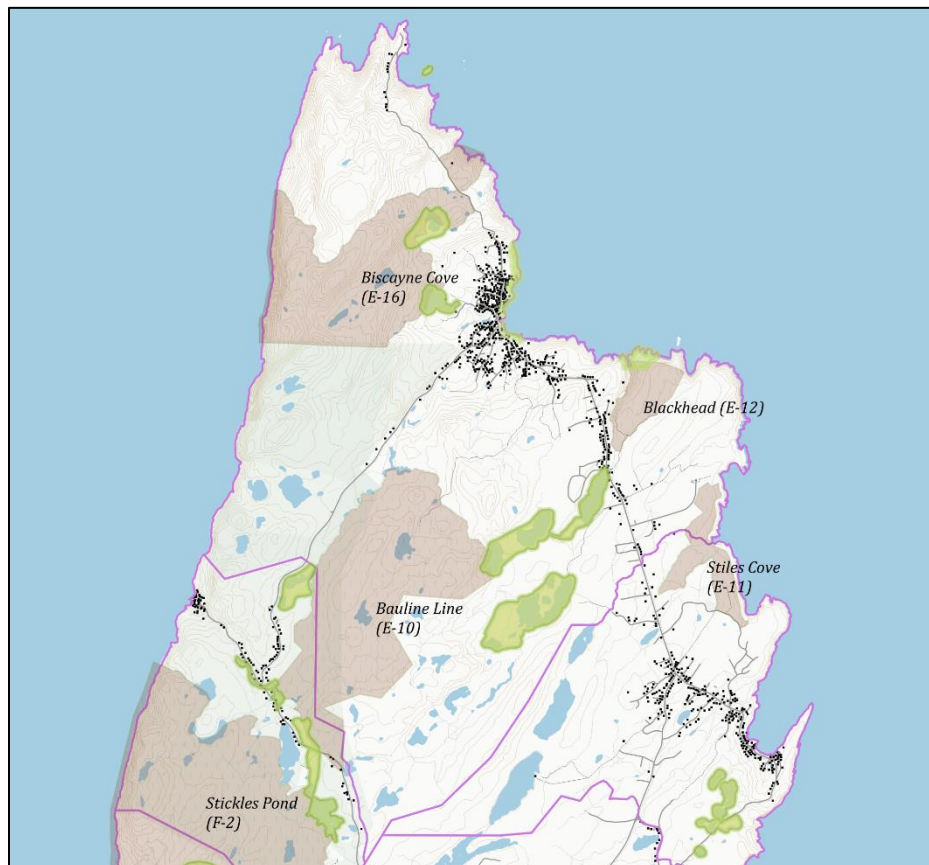
Parcels of Issued Crown Land (Issued Titles) shown in transparent purple

Forest Harvesting (Wood cutting)

Pouch Cove falls into Forestry Management Zone 1 (Avalon Peninsula). Two Domestic Cutting Areas and portions of two others designated by the provincial Department of Fisheries and Land Resources are within the municipal boundary of the Town of Pouch Cove (under the Crown 5-Year Operating Plan for Zone 1 (2017-2021)). The Biscayne Cove Domestic Cutting Area (E-16) overlaps with the Pouch Cove Northeast Pond and Old Pond areas. The Blackhead domestic cutting area (E-12) overlaps slightly with one of the coastal areas (Strawberry Point). The Bauline Line Domestic Cutting Area (E-10) overlaps slightly with the Grog Pond, Peyton's Pond, and Shoe Cove Pond area (at the western edge, at Grog's Pond).

The amount of cutting within these areas is minimal and is not likely to interfere with wildlife habitat conservation goals; however, that can change depending on the number of permits issued within each Domestic Cutting Area, where people choose to cut within the Domestic Cutting Area, and compliance with the regulations. For continued harmony between domestic cutting needs and wildlife conservation, both Town staff and SAM staff should visit these areas regularly and discuss any issues.

There is no overlap with any commercial cutting (Commercial Operating Areas)



Domestic cutting areas in Pouch Cove (shown in transparent dotted brown)

Section 4: Habitat Conservation and Education Strategies

This section presents ideas for community education, engagement, and habitat enhancement that could be implemented over time in the community. Community engagement and partnerships are the true strengths of any stewardship agreement.

One benefit that people receive from stewardship is the opportunity to increase their knowledge of nature. These projects are great for local groups, allowing hands-on involvement in conservation efforts. Communities across the province who have signed stewardship agreements have had great success becoming involved in exactly these types of projects and will also be resources for you to connect with, especially at SAM meetings. The ideas below, and many others, can be found at samnl.org/resources.

Explore grants and funding

Many of these activities and programs are free or can be funded through small community grants and via partnerships. Large grant applications may take several months to prepare if committees are involved. Allow enough time to apply for these grants and to obtain the letters of support that local partners such as SAM or the NL Department of Fisheries and Land Resources may provide; keep an eye on deadlines as they approach.

SAM provides a regularly updated list of many grants that will be relevant to you along with their deadlines at samnl.org/funding.

Hire a Green Team

Conservation Corps Newfoundland and Labrador (ccnl.ca) can help you hire summer Green Teams and interns, some of which can be funded by corporations at no cost to your organization. Students or recent graduates can work with municipalities on environmental projects. Municipalities with Stewardship Agreements, including Pouch Cove, have often received Green Teams. Examples of potential projects could include nest boxes, bird monitoring, trail maintenance, community outreach, wildlife surveys, and developing field guides. Green Team members and interns could help train local high school students in monitoring and could develop educational material designed to raise awareness for conservation and stewardship initiatives. Sharing a CCNL Green Team with neighbouring towns might be explored, especially if other towns are beginning environmental projects as well.



Find and place geocaches

Geocaches (small containers found via GPS; **geocaching.com** and **various mobile apps such as c:geo**) can be added alongside trails as well to provide a fun and inexpensive activity for walkers, hikers, and groups. It is a great idea to place geocaches near or at where you want people to go – to help them discover a new trail, a beautiful lookout, or an interpretive spot, for example.

Many geocaches already exist in the Town of Pouch Cove. SAM and the EHJV partnership (username EHJV_Stewardship) currently maintain over 30 geocaches in SAM municipalities across the province. After creating a geocaching account (or logging in first), the full list can be found at **geocaching.com/seek/nearest.aspx?u=EHJV_Stewardship**. A geocache has already been given to the Town of Pouch Cove - can you find it?



A nanocache style geocache before installation (with house key for scale). Staff photo

Construct trails & put up interpretive signs

Many SAM municipalities have found that trails increase recreation and health for residents and improve tourism possibilities. When constructed carefully, trails can increase stewardship by allowing people to discover new areas. They can help residents and visitors connect to nature, especially where interpretive signage is used to help point out interesting landscape and wildlife. Ducks Unlimited Canada, an EHJV partner, can in some cases partner on trail projects if time and funding allows.

Recreational and tourism opportunities can help raise awareness and educate visitors and residents about waterfowl and the importance of wetlands. Hiking, walking, birdwatching, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and geocaching are popular activities in many Conservation Areas across the province. Other activities such as photography and paddling (canoeing and kayaking) could be further encouraged as low-impact, healthy recreation opportunities for both residents and visitors.

In developing recreational and tourism opportunities, wildlife must be carefully considered during the planning process. Otherwise, human activities can negatively impact the resource that provides the attraction.

As part of the Stewardship Agreement, the Town of Pouch Cove has been provided with a large highway road sign plus a smaller interpretive sign. Additional interpretive signage could possibly be funded through grants to the Town of Pouch Cove; for example, the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation often funds trail and park projects (see funding opportunities link above for other possibilities)



Pouch Cove's Habitat Stewardship Road sign. Staff photo

Watch wildlife

Local groups and interested volunteers can watch and monitor birds, plants, and wildlife in all areas of the Town and especially in wetlands (includes ponds and marshes). This can provide information on changes in populations and can indicate problems or progress. By involving residents, they become more aware of these special places.

iNaturalist and **Seek** are free smartphone apps for those interested in learning to identify plants, butterflies and other insects, other invertebrates, birds, fungi, and mammals. They can be used to build plant and wildlife lists for any area, as a learning tool, for school students, family nature walks, and just for fun.

iNaturalist is great for adults as each nature observations turns into a real scientific data point. It also has a neat feature where other experts will identify your sightings for you - after taking a photo, it will often be identified within a few hours by another experienced user on the app. Turn your location services on so that your sighting can be found on the map and so others can help with your identifications. **Seek** is best for kids as it never saves location data and provides fun badges.



ebird.org is another free website and app to record bird sightings. It is already very popular across NL with more than 10 000 bird lists submitted each year.

Explore all the birds seen in Newfoundland and Labrador (click map to zoom to your area) at **ebird.org/ebird/canada/subnational1/CA-NL?yr=all**

Start contributing to eBird at **secure.birds.cornell.edu/casso/account/create**

When watching wildlife, be mindful of tides and wetland (damp, soft, slippery) habitat, making safety your priority. Aim to cause as little stress and disturbance as possible to wildlife.

Create artificial habitat

Build roosting and nesting structures for bats and birds

A variety of roosting and nest structures can be built, installed, monitored, and maintained for other bird species such as Tree Swallows, Northern Flickers, Great Horned Owls, Northern Saw-Whet Owls, and bats. Providing nesting boxes for Tree Swallows may increase their population in the area, which can help with natural insect pest control. Providing structures for predatory birds may also help reduce populations of undesirable birds (e.g. American Crow, European Starling) and rodents while increasing biodiversity.

Installing nest boxes and roosting structures is exciting, but takes time, commitment and maintenance; see samnl.org/backyard-habitats and samnl.org/enhancehabitats for details.



Bat Box with dimensions. Staff photo.

Construct islands

Many wildlife species, such as terns and waterfowl, nest and loaf on islands due to a reduced risk of predation from land-based predators, so constructing islands can help increase their populations. These structures can be constructed simply from wooden cribs (Tamarack / Larch would be an appropriate choice for building material), measuring approximately 4 m² that have been filled with rock and soil.

The islands must be positioned so that they are higher than the highest water mark. Hardy shrubs (e.g. alder, willow) must be planted on the islands to provide cover and to prevent occupancy from gulls. Take care to prevent the use of toxic construction materials (e.g. treated wood, contaminated soils) and disturbance to plant and animal communities. samnl.org/enhancehabitats has various free plans for islands and artificial nesting sites.

Help Pouch Cove residents enjoy nature

It's not just kids that enjoy the outdoors – adults and seniors benefit from time in nature. Birdwatching workshops have been successful in SAM communities (such as Spaniard's Bay), and snowshoe hikes in the winter or hikes in the summer are often enjoyed by adults as well.

Themes such as winter tracking or edible plant hikes can increase interest. Hikes can be inexpensive ways for adults in Pouch Cove to discover the natural areas of the town, socialize, and learn something new. CCNL Green Teams are required to give interpretive presentations as a part of their work programs; SAM's **Guide to delivering interpretive hikes** and field guides at samnl.org/outdoor-learning could help CCNL Green Teams or summer staff lead hikes for residents and/or visitors. These could be used to create a small brochure and 'bird checklist' or wildlife list of the area, or as the basis for field guides which could be developed by a Green Team, high school, or a relevant committee.



Interpretive "Winter wetland walk" at Gambo Bog. Staff photo

Explore outdoor education programs

Public education can help foster a greater sense of habitat stewardship among town residents. Pouch Cove's Snowfest (late February) or the Pouch Cove Days (July) are great opportunities to add in some nature games and activities. Residents will already be attending the festivals, so turnout is likely to be higher. Outdoor family activities are affordable, interesting, and appropriate for all ages. SAM staff can help - either by attending, training some of your residents, or by providing resources that you can use.

There are excellent wetland education programs that can be adapted for activities in Pouch Cove. Programs span every season and age group including *Wetlands in Winter* (Tantramar Wetlands Centre, weted.com), *Marsh Bingo* and *Creatures of the Night* (Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre, oakhammockmarsh.ca), *Junior Naturalists* (Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, wyemarsh.com), and *Wetland Field Trips* (Ducks Unlimited Canada, ducks.ca). Canadian Wildlife Federation's *Project Wild* can foster environmental ethics in youth and adults alike. Many evening programs also exist that would be great for guide and scout groups.

Nature and Art

Some stewardship municipalities such as Grand Falls-Windsor and Whitbourne use natural locations to bring together nature and art. Local art classes and drama groups can use an outdoor theatre for educational exercises. This could involve field trips whereby students could interpret natural beauty through various mediums (chalk, paint, etc.) or a day of sketching to the sound of nature or music. Companies like crayola.com offer resource grants to educators.

Similarly, drama classes could develop a play or series of dramatic readings based on nature. Several amphitheatres in Eastern Canada use the open-air concept to show nature-related programs outdoors in the evenings. Content can be tailored to various ages and could include nature-related craft projects as a follow up. Good starting points for nature projects for children include hookedonnature.org, planetpals.com, and hctfeducation.ca/resource-room

Backyard Habitat for Canada's Wildlife

This initiative from the Canadian Wildlife Federation (cwf-fcf.org) is administered by the Wildlife Division's Salmonier Nature Park (709 229 7888). The program offers inexpensive suggestions on how to make life better for wildlife and often includes a bird nesting box workshop as well.

Host or attend hunter workshops

Municipalities can partner with their local rod and gun club, the Department of Fisheries and Land Resources (Wildlife Division) and other partners to participate in hosting a *Youth Hunter Skills Workshop*. These events require volunteer commitment, organization, and expertise. However, they can be very rewarding for participants and foster a sense of stewardship. Similarly, the *Becoming an Outdoorswoman* program can help introduce women from Pouch Cove to sustainable, legal, hunting and fishing and is offered each spring and fall through the Wildlife Division in different locations across NL, often on the Avalon peninsula. Contact salmoniernaturepark@gov.nl.ca or **709 229 7888**.

Discover Ducks Unlimited Canada's Youth Programs

Educating youth about wetlands and waterfowl is part of Ducks Unlimited Canada's mission. There are many resources which link to school curricula at ducks.ca/resources/educators. The Wetland Heroes program has useful action guides which help young people improve and protect wetlands. You can register at ducks.ca/initiatives/wetland-heroes and describe your conservation work. Wetland Heroes receive a certificate and a token of appreciation. With permission, Wetland Heroes may be featured in DUC media, and some receive \$500 Awards of Merit. Contact **709 237 DUCK** or du_newfoundland@ducks.ca for more information.

Restore Habitat

In some wetland areas, habitat has been degraded or lost and could benefit from plantings. Some aquatic plant species improve water condition by absorbing excessive amounts of nitrogen, phosphorous, and carbon – substances associated with the occurrence of algal blooms. Many beneficial plant species have limited distributions on the Island of Newfoundland, and should not be introduced into the environment without considering potential consequences, including the possibility of invasive plants out-competing native plant species. SAM's guide to native plants for restoration projects is available at samnl.org/restore-habitat.

For example, eelgrass (*Zostera marina*) is an aquatic grass important for waterfowl and many aquatic species such as juvenile salmon and trout. It is possible to encourage the growth of eelgrass beds through an inexpensive project of habitat management and shoot transplantation from a nearby donor site. Some species of willow (*Salix* sp.) and alder (e.g. Green Alder, *Alnus viridis crispa*) are native to the island of Newfoundland and are renowned for their hardiness, ability to withstand tidal inundation, and extensive networks of roots.

The natural balance of an ecosystem can be changed when new species are introduced. Competition naturally exists between organisms within an ecosystem but the introduction of introduced, non-native, and possibly invasive species can allow for one species to outcompete most native species and have negative effects on wildlife.

Some retailers have expertise in selecting and planting native plants or experience with restoration. Timothy Murray at Murray's Garden Centre Portugal Cove can be contacted at timothymurray@murraysgardens.com or 709 895 2800 for potential projects. Nuthatch Nursery in Lethbridge NL (709 467 1309) also specializes in native plants. SAM member municipality the Town of Bonavista also recently completed a wetland restoration project at O'Dea's Pond; lessons learned are often shared with SAM members in newsletters and at meetings so that other municipalities and groups may be able to take on similar projects in the future.



***Lefthand photo:** Construction in progress to dig out a former wetland and recreate islands; **right hand photo:** At the conclusion of the project - one of the completed islands showing new growth. Staff photos*

One potential restoration project has been identified in Pouch Cove. Near the road next to Pouch Cove Highway (Main Road) alongside the eastern edge of Shoe Cove Pond (near the habitat stewardship road sign), there is no riparian vegetated buffer, only lawn and some rocks. When this buffer was lost is not known, but because of the importance of riparian buffers (see above), a restoration project to rebuild part of this buffer could be a promising project. If you observe other situations where aquatic sites or land could benefit from restoration (such as obstructions to river flows, erosion, litter, destruction of wetlands, etc) please contact samconservation@gmail.com. We may be able to partner on restoration projects, as we have with other SAM municipalities.

Conclusion

We hope these ideas have you thinking about ways you could become involved in protecting and enhancing wildlife habitat in your area. Keep an eye on samnl.org, our newsletter, and our social media, where additional resources are added regularly – and we hope to see you at the SAM conferences each year. Remember, community involvement is the true strength of a Stewardship Agreement!

Appendix 1: Conservation enforcement form

Complaint / information related to conservation, hunting, or wildlife enforcement issues

You can also report any issues online 24/7 by calling 1.877.820.0999 or at stoppoaching.ca

You can stay anonymous, whether it's by phone, online, or on this form

Please fill in as much of the following information as you can. Even partial info can be helpful

Date When did it happen? Or is it an ongoing issue?	
Time Is there a specific time of day when it happens?	
Suspects Do you have an idea of who it might be?	
Location Where is it happening? Being as specific as possible will help	
Vehicles Description of vehicles (ATVs, cars, trucks, boats, etc.) being used and/or licence plates	

Please fill in any other details

Do you wish to remain anonymous (Circle one)

Yes

No

If you choose to provide your name or number, you may be contacted for follow up. If you provide this info it will be kept confidential by enforcement, or you may remain completely anonymous by leaving both these spaces blank. Thank you – you're playing an important role in protecting your natural resources.

**Name
(optional)**

**Phone
(optional)**