

Ecological Gifts Program

Donor Profile

Photo: Nova Scotia Nature Trust

Protecting Precious Mature Forest Habitat in Cape Breton

For nearly two decades after her husband's passing in 2004, Gertude McCarron remained the sole owner of an ecologically significant forest in Lime Hill, Cape Breton, without giving it much thought. **"I didn't realize the significance and value of the land that I owned,"** McCarron recalls.

While planning her succession, McCarron was introduced to the Ecological Gifts Program. **"I didn't know about the Nova Scotia Nature Trust,"** she admits. **"I would never have discovered it if my lawyer hadn't mentioned it."** With none of her four children interested in the land, the Nature Trust jumped at the opportunity, eager to protect the 38-hectare property.

"Cape Breton has been inhabited for a very long time," explains Jaimee Morozoff, biologist and Director of Conservation at the Nature Trust. **"For centuries, people have been impacting the land. Finding old-growth forest is rare in Nova Scotia."**

Lime Hill's rugged terrain has kept the lumber industry at bay – precisely what makes this parcel so vital. Rising from the western shores of the Bras d'Or Lakes – Cape Breton's "inland sea," the site shelters mature deciduous trees and the at-risk Blue Felt Lichen. Thanks to McCarron's generosity and the Ecological Gifts Program, this precious habitat is now permanently protected.

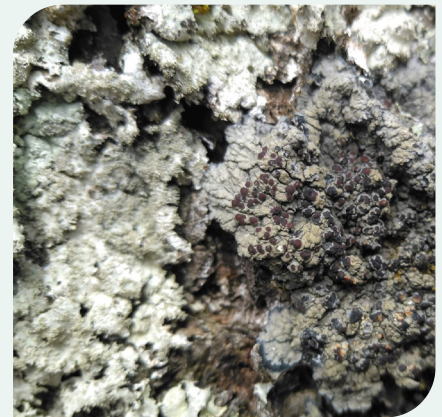


Photo: Nova Scotia Nature Trust



Photo : Nova Scotia Nature Trust

The Ecological Gifts Program helps landowners protect ecologically sensitive areas while offering financial benefits, subject to three requirements:

1. The land must be certified as ecologically sensitive;
2. The fair market value of the ecological gift must be determined; and
3. The gift must be donated to a qualified recipient (such as a land trust, or a municipal, provincial or federal government) that will ensure that the land's biodiversity and environmental heritage are conserved in perpetuity.



“Lichens aren’t exciting for most people,” Morozoff concedes, **“but they are powerful indicators of a truly healthy, undisturbed forest.”** The humidity of the Bras d’Or Lakes creates unique conditions across the broader North Mountain Ridge, where the Nature Trust’s lands connect with other protected areas and provincial conservation tracts.

As of October 2025, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust had received 56 ecological gifts, totalling 2600 hectares (including Gertrude McCarron’s 38 hectares). Those gifts amount to 21 % of all the protected land owned by the NSNT.

“My land lies between two other protected areas, and it all blends together,” McCarron explains. Step by step, the Nova Scotia Nature Trust is stitching together a conservation corridor, from mountaintop habitats down to sea-level ecosystems. McCarron’s ecological gift adds a crucial piece to this growing network.

“When someone donates such land, it’s always so important,” Morozoff notes. **“It enables us to do so much more. We can take that donation and fold it into this larger protected complex.”** Ecological gifts are a cornerstone of the Nature Trust’s private land conservation efforts. **“Donors are people who deeply feel that this is the right thing to do. They truly love this land, and they want to ensure it’s cared for in perpetuity.”**

Gertrude McCarron is now recognized as one of hundreds of donors across Atlantic Canada. **“I’m so pleased that it worked out,”** she says. **“The land is assessed; you get a tax break on the fair market value. It’s really a win-win. And I’m thrilled that this land will be in good hands for generations to come.”**

**Do you own land that contains natural habitat, such as a forest, prairie, wetland or shoreline?
Would you like to see it protected for future generations?**

Through the Government of Canada’s Ecological Gifts Program, landowners can donate their land, or a partial interest such as a conservation easement agreement, to an eligible recipient organization that will care for it forever, such as a land trust, conservation organization, or government. In addition to the peace of mind that the land will be forever protected, donors can receive significant income tax benefits including elimination of any tax on the capital gain.

For more information, visit the Ecological Gifts Program website at:
www.canada.ca/ecological-gifts

Photo: Nova Scotia Nature Trust



Cat. No.: En14-563/9-2026E-PDF

ISBN: 978-0-660-98478-0

His Majesty the King in Right of Canada, represented by the
Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature, 2026

Aussi disponible en français