



Shelter Cove anchorage offers good protection in virtually any condition.
Photo by Bob Guscott

By Judy Robertson with Bill Greenwood, Bras d'Or Station

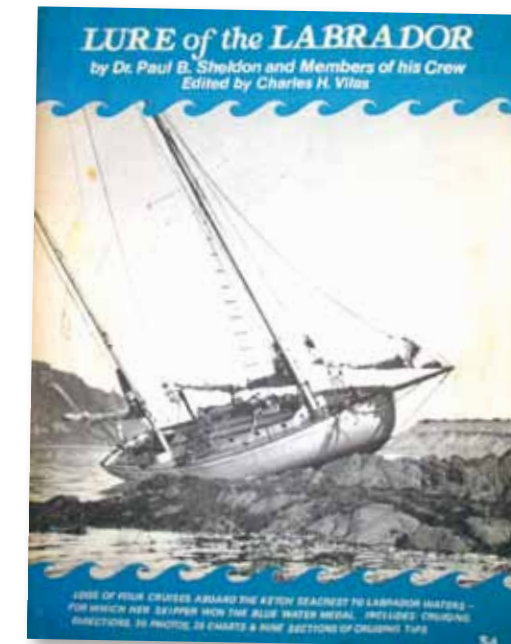
Announcing 100 Wild Islands of Nova Scotia

“100 Wild Islands” conjures up so many thoughts for sailors.

We can dream about white sandy beaches, rolling surf, foaming reefs, cliffs, marine mammals and hundreds of other images. Nova Scotia is now extremely lucky to have the “100 Wild Islands,” an area along the Eastern Shore between Halifax and Cape Breton that is being preserved by the Nova Scotia Nature Trust. This astonishing area is not just a mere 100 islands, but actually over 200 islands and islets. This cruising ground is perfect for the seasoned mariner and will also pique the imagination of the novice sailor.

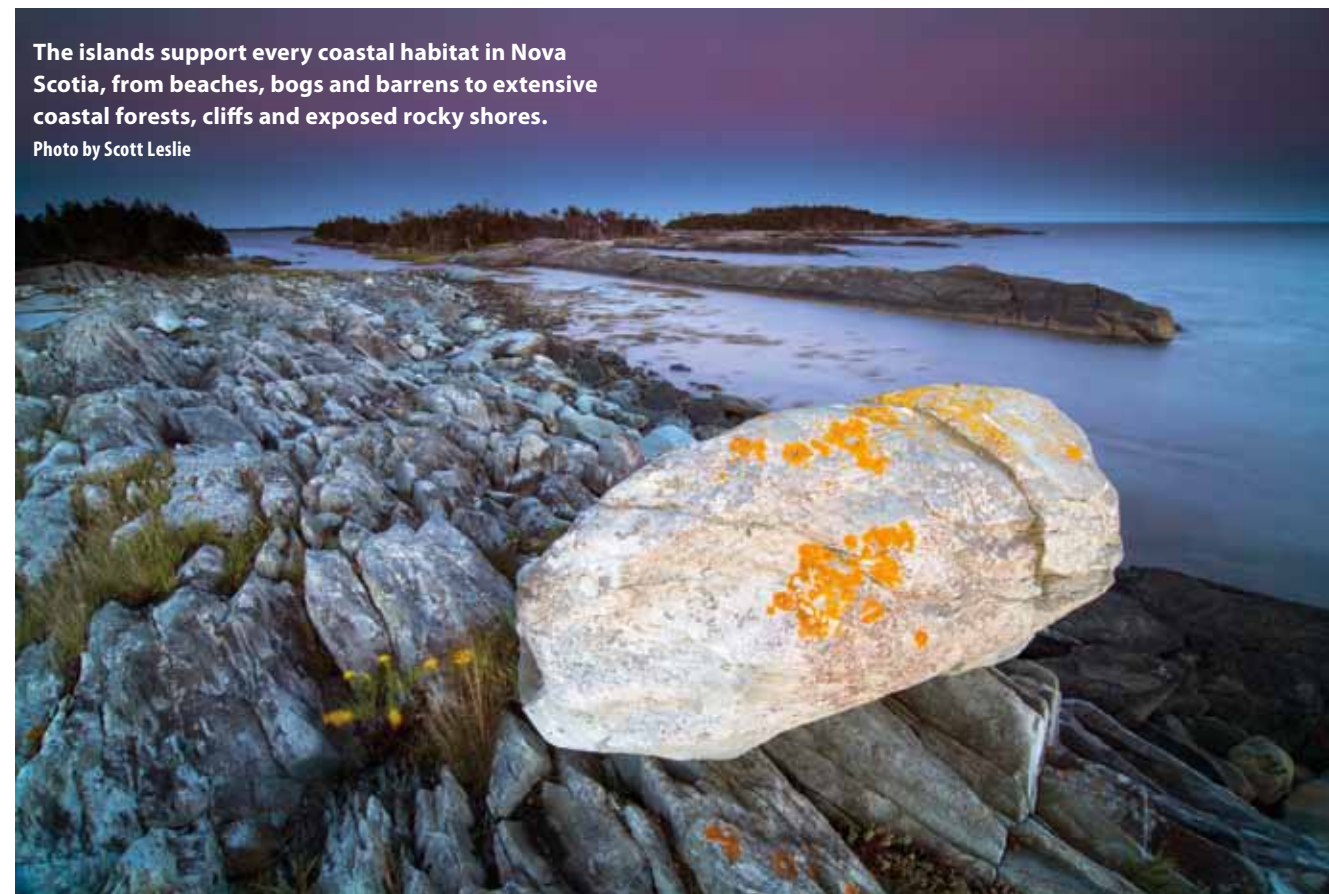
I know, as well as you that we were all novice sailors at one time. Bill Greenwood and I had the great fortune of being raised as neighbors in Halifax and spent our summers “messaging about in boats” on the Northwest Arm. As children we always wondered what lay beyond the approaches to Halifax Harbour and through neighborhood connections we both managed to hop rides on “big” boats at the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron.

My first cruising adventures were with two renowned CCA members, Dr. Paul B. Sheldon on *Seacrest* and Gordon Mack aboard *Hebridee*. Paul was a Blue Water Medal recipient for his sailing in the Labrador and Newfoundland. He wrote the much loved book, “Lure of the Labrador.” Gordon was a Bras d’Or station member who died about two years ago. His *Hebridee* is now being restored to its former glory at the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax. Little did I know that these two men would have such an impact on my life and sailing exploits.



The islands support every coastal habitat in Nova Scotia, from beaches, bogs and barrens to extensive coastal forests, cliffs and exposed rocky shores.

Photo by Scott Leslie



“ The islands support an interconnected mosaic of every coastal habitat found in Nova Scotia. ”

I remember gunkholing along our beautiful Nova Scotian coast and feeling as if we were the first to ever have ventured into these remote coves. As a youth, Bill managed to find a berth aboard the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron's Commodore's boat and explored the same wonderful hidden bays and islands that so many CCA members have enjoyed for decades.

However, over the years, we have seen many of these coveted sailing grounds and anchorages sold to individuals who have not had the same appreciation for their majestic beauty. Fortunately for all of us, there are like-minded people who wanted to see that some of



The stunning 530-acre Borgles Island is a keystone property of the proposed wilderness area.

Photo by Vision Air



these special spots remain protected from future development. A number of Bras d'Or Station members have been involved in campaigns that have acquired islands to be protected with land trusts or government conservation agencies in both St. Margaret's Bay and Mahone Bay. For last fall's Bras d'Or Station gathering, Bill organized a presentation about a fantastic initiative on the Eastern Shore of Nova Scotia. This really triggered my interest as I have cruised and kayaked those islands and I am thrilled that a campaign is underway to ensure they will be preserved for future generations.

Off Nova Scotia's Eastern Shore lies a hidden treasure—a remote and wild archipelago of coastal islands and headlands encompassing over 7,000 acres of diverse and ecologically rich coastal habitats. Despite Nova Scotia's long history of settlement, this flotilla of over 200 islands

has for millennia largely been left to the ravages of wind, wave and fog, experiencing little disturbance from humans—the result is one of the continent's last great coastal island wildernesses.

Just a day's sail east of Halifax (between Clam Harbour Beach and Taylor Head Provincial Park), untouched white sand beaches and idyllic sheltered coves, dramatic, wind-swept headlands and rugged rocky shorelines welcome the intrepid sailor. The islands support an interconnected mosaic of every coastal habitat found in Nova Scotia. Their boreal rain forests, wetlands, bogs and barrens have gone largely undisturbed by humans for more than 10,000 years, providing refuge for a rich diversity of wildlife. The archipelago stretches over 15 nautical miles along the coast. This is truly a globally significant coastal island, sailing paradise.

“**With large ecologically rich, wild island wilderness territory becoming increasingly rare ... and over 85 percent of the coast in private ownership ... this opportunity is simply irreplaceable.**”

The Nova Scotia Nature Trust, the Province’s leading land conservation charity, recognized that we have before us an exciting and unparalleled opportunity to preserve an irreplaceable part of Canada’s treasured coastal legacy. In partnership with landowners, the local community and the provincial government, the Nature Trust’s efforts will protect over 200 islands, including many over 300 acres in size (some of the Province’s largest and some so large they support freshwater lakes—a rarity in Nova Scotia!), over 110 miles of shoreline, 430 acres of wetlands, some of eastern North America’s only temperate rainforest and a rich diversity of wildlife, including over 120 species of birds, from eagles and osprey to seabirds and song birds.

Success depends on protecting the entire island group, including both Crown and privately-owned islands. While Nova Scotians have twice before recognized the significant nature of this archipelago, proposing the islands both as a National Park and later a Provincial Park, a key ingredient was missing: a solution for effectively protecting the islands in private ownership and positively engaging the local communities. With the Nature Trust’s bold conservation vision and unique community-based private land conservation approach, the stars have finally aligned.

Great strides are already being made in protecting the 100 Wild Islands. Several outstanding conservation sites have been protected to date—including the stunning cliffs of Ship Rock, the majestic coves and sand beaches of Shelter Cove, the spectacular 530-acre Borgles Island, plus 275 acres of the 800-acre Gerard Island. Other island owners are keen to add their lands to this coastal legacy too, so more success lies just ahead. Using a community-based land trust approach, the remaining ecologically important privately-owned islands will be forever protected, through a combination of conservation agreements, land donations and purchase.

The Province has also been captivated by this bold conservation vision, and has now committed to protect the remaining 4,000 acres of Crown-owned islands in the archipelago, including Wolfe’s Island, a paradise known and loved by many who have sailed this shore.

With large, ecologically rich, wild island wilderness territory becoming increasingly rare anywhere on the planet and over 85 percent of the coast in private ownership and facing increasing pressures, this opportunity is simply irreplaceable. The Nature Trust’s conservation vision and campaign to protect this entire wilderness archipelago offers the potential for a globally significant and wonderful gift to all Nova Scotians and to all who sail this unique coastline, now and for generations to come.



A multitude of rocky islets in the archipelago are home to breeding seabirds.
Photo by Scott Leslie



This popular beach known as the Sand Bar makes an excellent picnic spot. Photo by Peter Green

We hope that you will take time to cruise this very special part of Nova Scotia that is so often forgotten on a trip to the Bras d’Or lakes or Newfoundland. Bras d’Or Station members would be happy to share their knowledge of this incredible sailing ground or feel free to contact Bill at bill.greenwood@greenwoodlane.com or Judy at armdalecove@gmail.com. If you are interested in more information on the islands and efforts to protect them, you can visit the Nova

Scotia Nature Trust website at www.nsnt.ca. Also, we will be working with the author and publisher of the CCA’s “Cruising Guide to the Nova Scotia Coast” and others in Nova Scotia with online updates. You may view those at <http://www.puffin-press.com/novascotia.htm>

Hope to see you along our beautiful coast this summer. ☺

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Judy Robertson

Besides being very involved in keel boat sailing, Judy has been a driving force in youth sailing in Nova Scotia when she served on the board of the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron as vice commodore of Sail Training. She was instrumental in taking the summer program and turning it into a National Centre of Excellence where the National Sailing Team is often seen training. Under her tenure, the new MAC (Marine Activity Centre) was built and is now the hub of youth sailing in Atlantic Canada. Judy was awarded the 2009 Female Sailor of the Year for Nova Scotia and in 2010 was invited to join the Cruising Club of America.

Bill Greenwood

Bill is a Bras d’Or Station member and longtime member and past commodore of the Royal Nova Scotia Yacht Squadron. He has enjoyed many years of offshore racing and cruising. Bill started racing offshore in the Marblehead to Halifax Race at the age of 17. Many races since then include Marblehead to Halifax races as skipper aboard his boats Confrere and Airborne IV. Additionally he has cruised to the south coast of Newfoundland plus St. Pierre and Miquelon. Having already competed in the past two Newport to Bermuda Races, Bill plans to race again in 2016. He lives in Seabright on the shores of St. Margaret’s Bay, south of Halifax.

