



NCC protects natural oasis surrounded by cities

Description

Thor Vikström donates Laval island to the Nature Conservancy of Canada

December 15, 2021

The **Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC)** is protecting another natural area between Montreal and Laval. Thanks to a generous land donation by **Thor Vikström**, **Île Ronde**, a three-hectare island on the **Rivière des Prairies**, is now conserved for the long term.



Île Ronde shore – Image: NCC

The gift of a natural treasure

Nature lover and sportsman, Thor Vikström had a desire to create a natural legacy for future generations by trusting NCC with the stewardship of his family's land. The Vikström family, originally from Sweden, moved to Canada in the 1960s and took care of this island for half a century. Thanks to their good stewardship and respectful land use, the island has remained in its natural state amid decades of urban growth around it. The Vikström family is very involved in the protection of Quebec's precious wildlife. In addition to being donors to NCC, they support Ducks Unlimited Canada.

Hear Thor Vikström talk about his donation (in French and English, with English subtitles.)





Map turtle – Image: Ryan M. Bolton

A haven of biodiversity

This acquisition increases the number of protected areas in the region and improves habitat for many of the species found here. Of note, **shagbark hickory**, a tree species that is likely to be designated as threatened or vulnerable in Quebec, will be protected by this acquisition. There is also a wetland suitable for fish and amphibian reproduction here.

Map turtles, a species listed as being of special concern at the federal level and vulnerable in Quebec, frequently use the natural shores of this island, which provide it with a resting place safe from disturbance. Sites such as these are becoming increasingly rare for this species, which is present in the most densely populated region in Quebec.



Wood duck – Image: Matthew McPhee

Waterbirds and several species of waterfowl, such as **Canada goose, wood duck, gadwall, black duck, American wigeon** and **common merganser**, are frequently seen in this area. Several fish can be found in the waters of the Rivière des Prairies, including **burbot, northern pike, yellow perch, bowfin, largemouth bass** and **black crappie**. The conservation of undisturbed shorelines helps ensure the water quality that these fish require.

“This little jewel of biodiversity has endured in an urban setting. The Vikström family has taken great care of it and with this very meaningful act, we are protecting the natural diversity of this unique habitat for the benefit of the animal and plant species that live there, but also for future generations. Few people know this, but a significant portion of NCC’s protected areas comes from generous donors who choose to donate ecologically valuable land. It’s a gift that many people can make and one that can provide tax benefits to donors. It’s a way to help protect our beautiful planet.”



– Annie Ferland, project manager for the Montreal Greenbelt at the Nature Conservancy of Canada

Best practices

By maintaining a strip of natural vegetation on their shore, waterfront landowners can help restore shoreline quality for species and increase biodiversity. Shorelines have been heavily modified over the past century, but fortunately, nature is resilient! A few simple actions, such as leaving dead wood in place, planting native vegetation and controlling invasive exotic species, can make a difference.

Acknowledgements

This project was made possible thanks to several partners. NCC would like to thank Thor Vikström, the former owner of this site, for his generosity. The conservation of this property also benefited from the financial support of the Quebec government, through the **Projet de partenariat pour les milieux naturels**, and of the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**, under the **North American Wetlands Conservation Act**. Protection, restoration and awareness actions to conserve and enhance the St. Lawrence ecosystem and, more specifically, to conserve turtle habitats, such as that of map turtle, will be carried through the **Community Interaction Program**. NCC would also like to thank the **Laurentian Bank** for its continued support and the **Age of Union Foundation** for the protection of the St. Lawrence River islands.

Feature image: aerial photo of Île Ronde by Claude Duchai?ne

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The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is Canada's leading not-for-profit, private land conservation organization, working to protect our most important natural areas and the species they sustain. Since 1962, NCC and its partners have helped to protect 14 million hectares, coast to coast to coast, including 48,000 hectares in Quebec. To learn more, visit natureconservancy.ca



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