



NATURAL AREAS IN PROVINCIAL PARKS

The Parks Branch sits on the Technical Advisory Committee to the Natural Areas Protection Act along with Forestry, Fish & Wildlife, Community Planning, Environmental Strategy, Government Properties and Agriculture. This body has made many recommendations to government concerning a Significant Environmental Areas Program.

Government has approved the program and the designation of over 90 natural areas across Prince Edward Island. The committee is currently at work preparing individual management plans and getting these sites formally designated. Natural areas fall into two classes: biological and educational and it is the latter which significantly affects Provincial Parks. Several parts of individual parks now carry the additional natural area designation under the Natural Areas Protection Act and they are in locations ideally suited for interpretation to and access by the general public.

Brudenell, Cedar Dunes, Cabot Beach, Green Park and Strathgartney Provincial Parks currently contain designated natural areas of varying types. Brudenell features a stand of pine along the upper part of the Brudenell River. Cedar Dunes contains a cedar stand growing on sand dunes which are inland in the heavily vegetated part of the park. Cabot Beach is recognized for its low dune system across the mouth of Darnley Basin. Green Park contains three salt marshes and Strathgartney has a mature stand of maple and beech. Each site also provides habitat for its own mix of other plant and animal species. Each of these sites will be signed as natural areas in 1993 and efforts will be ongoing to build programs for the public around the natural features. Brudenell, Cabot Beach, Cedar Dunes and Strathgartney now have summer naturalists and the new designation is serving to highlight the natural features for the park communities.

Parks also manage other natural areas outside the established park system and community awareness for these sites is even more important. Townshend Woodlot in Eastern Kings County serves as a good example with its stand of old growth hardwood. The community is hoping to highlight eco-tourism as a feature for the area and link several of these sites on a natural areas tour. Public education outdoors is also being popularly linked to health and exercise, all of which fits beautifully with the aims of Provincial Parks.