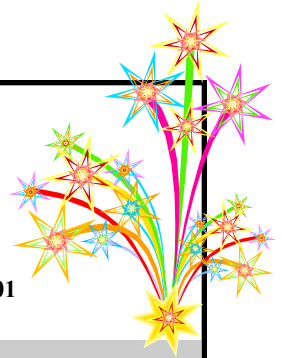




# *The Rucksack*

Newsletter of the Friends of McNabs Island Society  
 The society is a registered charity: CCRA number 88847 4194 RR 0001





Volume Twenty, Issue 1/2

*Celebrating 22 Years*


Summer & Fall 2012

The FRIENDS  
 of  
 McNABS ISLAND  
 Society

**Fall Foliage Tours**  
 Sun. Oct. 14, 2012 / 10am-5:00pm  
 rain date October 21

tickets @ [www.ticketatlantic.com](http://www.ticketatlantic.com)  
 members & children \$12 / others \$15  
[www.mcnabsisland.ca](http://www.mcnabsisland.ca)



Join the Friends of McNabs Island Society for the annual Fall Foliage Tour of **McNabs Island Provincial Park**. See the island in its autumn splendour and participate in guided history and nature tours.

- Visit the island's many historic sites including Victorian Gardens, pop bottle factory, grounds of the historic Conrad and Lynch homes and stop at historic Fort Ives for a breathtaking view of Halifax Harbour.
- Roam the island with a biologist exploring the park's animal and plant habitats.
- Learn more about the tragic story of the *SS England*, stricken with cholera and quarantined near McNabs in 1866.
- Explore the setting of the acclaimed Thomas Raddall novel, *Hangman's Beach*.
- *visite guidée en français aussi!*

Contact Ticket Atlantic for tickets

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## Friends of McNabs Island Society The Rucksack

The Friends of McNabs Island Society is a registered charity established in 1990 to preserve, protect and promote McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park and Fort McNab National Historic Site. *The Rucksack* is a publication of the Friends of McNabs Island Society.

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*We welcome contributions, ideas and feedback.*

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## Paddle and Clean Up

By Faye Power

On Saturday, September 8th, 2012, a perfect sunny day, 7 kayakers and 5 canoeists, led by Dusan Soudek, launched their boats from the Shearwater Yacht Club to participate in the fifteenth annual paddle cleanup around Lawlors Island. For the first time, nine other volunteers, led by Lyn Underhill, were dropped off at Lawlors Island by Steve Taylor of Taylormade Tours to also participate in the beach cleanup.

Between all 21 volunteers, we collected 80 bags of garbage and 10 bag-equivalents, such as plastic pipes and styroform blocks. The paddlers also came across garbage at Timmins Cove, McNabs Island, that had been collected during the June beach cleanup on McNabs but were missed being picked up. Unfortunately, this garbage had been strewn all over the place by critters and had to be rebagged by the paddlers for pickup.

The paddlers had the pleasure of seeing two harbour porpoises while paddling around the island. Some unusual items found were a dust mask resembling a gas mask, a quilt, an unopened flavored, colored condom, a message in a bottle, a TV and a fragile Christmas ornament still intact.



## Keeping McNabs and Lawlor Islands Clean takes Effort and Money!

By Catherine McCarthy

Two hundred volunteers descended upon McNabs Island June 3rd to kick off Environment Week, collecting 450 bags of garbage and recyclables from the island shoreline. For 21 years, the Friends of McNabs Island have organized this cleanup event, which is considered the longest running and largest cleanup in the Maritimes. Every year the event gets bigger, as more and more Nova Scotians want to help out and rid the island of ocean debris.

This year's unusual items included: a platform shoe, a plastic white swan lawn ornament, a plastic

smoking station, a Porta Pottie, an old television set, a dress mannequin, an industrial vacuum cleaner, a stuffed frog, a sleeping bag and one of the Cunard Centre's signs.



Harbourview School's Take Action students play on the beach after a long day cleaning up garbage.



Fishing boat piled with garbage from the June cleanup.

Sadly the most common items found on the beaches are plastics and Styrofoam, Tim Horton's coffee cups and plastic tampon applicators. It is discouraging to see so many plastic tampon applicators still washing ashore from the sewage system. The HRM sewage treatment plants are supposed to filter out this garbage, but clearly they don't work like they should. Women need to realize that flushing tampon applicators down the toilet will result in polluting beautiful beaches along Canada's Ocean Playground.

Since 1991, our volunteers have collected over 10,670 bags of garbage and recyclables from the shorelines of McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park and Fort McNab National Historic Site.

These cleanups are costly for the Friends of McNabs Island. Nova Scotia Natural Resources helps us by hauling the garbage to the main wharf and HRM provides free garbage tipping service, but we have to hire boats to transport volunteers and haul the garbage off the island.

We do NOT receive any financial support for our efforts. This year's June and September cleanups, which removed 540 bags from the beaches, cost us \$2,550, or \$4.72 per bag! If anyone knows of a business or individual who would like to help us and sponsor our cleanups, please let us know.

## FORT MCNAB VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT CANCELLED

By Catherine McCarthy

In May of this year, Royce Walker and I met with Parks Canada to discuss our volunteer agreement for the clean-up and maintenance of Fort McNab National Historic Site. For the past 17 years, the Friends of McNabs have maintained the McNab Family Cemetery, located within the confines of Fort McNab,



Royce Walker (centre) tells visitors how Fort McNab protected Halifax Harbour during the Fall Foliage Tours last year. The large breech-loading gun was brought back to the fort in 2011.

and organized cleanups and brush clearing around the national historic site referred to by Parks Canada as the “Gatekeeper of Halifax Harbour.”

This year we found out that due to federal government cutbacks, our volunteer stewardship agreement has been cancelled. We were told that Parks Canada would no longer give us an annual grant of \$1,500 to cover our equipment, transportation and insurance costs. We offered to look elsewhere for funding to do this important job, but Parks Canada has refused our help. Instead they told us that their own staff would maintain the national historic site, mow the grass and weeds in the cemetery, clean up the garbage and clear the brush from around the historic buildings.

We were quite pleased when Parks Canada spent \$1,597,669 of the Economic Action Plan funds to

stabilize Fort McNab over the past two years. Contractors rebuilt the drainage system, stabilized the buildings and gun emplacements, and returned the large breech-loading guns to the site after more than a 70-year absence. Last year we featured these welcomed improvements at our annual meeting when Dr. Carla Wheaton spoke about the importance of this national historic site, and then again during our Fall Foliage Tours when Royce led a group of over 100 visitors to the site.

Now after spending nearly \$1.6M, Parks Canada has essentially “mothballed” Fort McNab National Historic Site.

Parks Canada says that Fort McNab will not provide visitor services. However, there haven’t been any visitor services at Fort McNab since the early 1980s when Parks Canada offered summer guide services. In the government’s eyes, our volunteer agreement to cleanup garbage, and maintain the historic graveyard of the McNab Family supports visitor services which justifies their decision to cancel our longstanding agreement.

There is little that the Friends of McNabs Island can do, but if readers feel disappointed and disillusioned by this turn of events, please contact your member of parliament and write to the Hon. Peter Kent, Minister of Environment and the minister responsible for Parks Canada at [Minister@ec.gc.ca](mailto:Minister@ec.gc.ca).



Carolyn Mont (centre) tells visitors about the lives of the McNab family buried in the cemetery at Fort McNab National Historic Site.

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## Thoughts of McNabs, from Hot ‘n Hazy Toronto

By John Tomlinson

Ever since my return to the hot, humid, and polluted air of Toronto, I have found my thoughts drifting back to 31 wonderfully cool and clean early summer days spent in Halifax, and especially to my time on McNabs Island. Since 2010, McNabs has become an integral part of my annual summer sojourns in Halifax. Counting two visits to the island this summer, I now have a total of five McNabs days to my credit. For the “Friends of McNabs Island” who live in Halifax, that must seem a very shallow acquaintance with the island indeed, but perhaps it’s not so shabby for a McNabs “Friend” from faraway Toronto. In my conversations with shopkeepers, waiters, bus drivers, and hotel staff – I can never resist talking about McNabs – I have discovered that there are actually many Haligonians who have never set foot on this huge island paradise which is so temptingly parked right on their doorstep.

McNabs is often described in terms of what ISN’T there: no phones, no washrooms, no food or drinking water, nothing for sale, no cars, no pavement, no landscaping except by nature, no hunting unless you are an osprey or a fox, no camping except by permit, not even any regular transportation to get there. But if ever there existed proof of the axiom “less is more,” McNabs is surely that proof. It is my hope that the island may long boast of these “deficiencies,” for taken together they add up to a priceless resource: calm.

In the five days that I have spent on the island, I have not seen, in total, more people than may be counted on both hands. Sometimes I see no one at all. But I hope the “success” of McNabs will never be measured by the number of people it attracts. If that happens, the island will be doomed to become just another victim of consumerism. How absolutely delightful to find space where one may be alone in nature, with just one’s thoughts for company. There are precious few such places so close to populated areas. I love the long walk on the Garrison Road. The landscape on the way to Fort Ives is so varied: a pond, a huge beach, ferns and forests, harbour views, and so many roadside reminders of the island’s less than calm military past. This summer I visited Fort McNab for the first time, and was pleased to see that recent work there has not been so thorough as to give the site that plastic look that is often the end result of “restoration.” Inside one of the old fort buildings, a bird, nesting somewhere up in the roof, zoomed over my head and flew out one of the window openings. Perfect.

This summer, as I now have an improved grasp of the island’s geography, I started exploring some of the trails, and was rewarded by sighting a deer, a garter snake, an osprey, and countless other birds of many varieties. The conservational work done by the “Friends of McNabs Island” is evident. The island is indeed fortunate to have such zealous protectors. Regular cleanups have resulted in very little shoreline debris. On each visit I do my part by returning to Fisherman’s Cove with all my lunch wrappings, plus pockets stuffed with plastic bottle caps, elastic bands – whatever small litter I find along the way. Such garbage has no place in paradise.

I am already planning my trip for 2013 when, once again, I will be calling Steve Taylor or Mike Tilley and saying, “Hey, any chance of a ride to McNabs tomorrow?”



John Tomlinson

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## A Summer on McNabs Island

By Rachael Mansfield

Prior to May of this year, I had no idea that there was a natural park at the mouth of Halifax Harbour. I'd heard of McNabs Island before, but was not precisely sure where it was and never really gave it much thought.

It was through a biology class at Dalhousie that I was first introduced to the Island. During a two week field course in animal behaviour, our class took a field trip to McNabs. My first impression was not a positive one; I'm not going to lie. The first thing I saw when I stepped off the boat was tampons. Lots and lots of tampons. It was gross! But once we left the beach, I started to appreciate just how beautiful the island was despite my initial impression. It was so quiet and peaceful and, well, beautiful.

A few days after that field trip I came across a job posting on the Dal website for a summer tour guide with the Friends of McNabs Island Society. I submitted my resume and the rest is history! Giving tours of the island has probably been one of the most fun and, at the same time, challenging jobs I've ever had!



"Gullbert" the seagull

The summer flew past in a blur. I can't possibly describe all the wonderful experiences I've had in the past three months in a newsletter article. Giving tours with youth groups and day camps, finding a tiny baby fawn, and rescuing a seagull fall into the top three greatest moments on McNabs. The seagull, affectionately named Gullbert, was found with a broken wing at Wreck Cove. We scooped him up and took him to Hope for Wildlife, an animal rehab centre. All in all, it has been a fantastic summer filled with adventure, beauty, and lots of hiking. I had a great time on McNabs and I can't wait to go back!

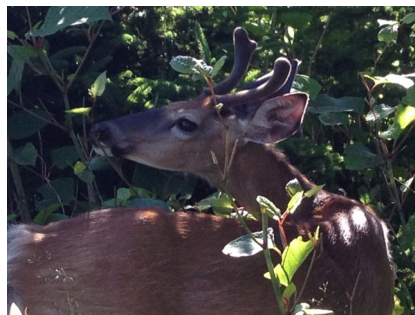
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## McNabs Island's Most Unwanted: Japanese Knotweed

By Rachael Mansfield

Being McNabs Island enthusiasts, many of us know about the plant known as Japanese Knotweed. Tall and bamboo-like with big green leaves, it was first brought to Nova Scotia by early settlers and used as a decorative plant and quick growing hedge. However, as elsewhere, the Japanese Knotweed on McNabs Island did not stay where it was intended. Before long it was running rampant, sprouting up here, there and everywhere and choking out the local flora. Now the island is overrun with the formidable weed and it doesn't seem that there is a whole lot to be done about it, as it is notoriously hard to kill.

However, over the course of this summer, we began to notice something. The knotweed that had been growing tall all spring suddenly seemed a bit chewed up and, well, short. Then one day we noticed a young buck chowing down in a patch of Japanese Knotweed. Then we noticed it again, and again. By the end of the summer, many of the patches have been chewed down to a much shorter height than normal. It appears that the deer have developed a taste for this unwanted invader - which is pretty good news. With the deer eating the plants, it might be possible to naturally control the explosion of Knotweed that is especially noticeable on the island. It isn't a solid solution, but it is definitely a start.



## McNabs Island Updates – the saga of trails, toilets, benches and a shed

By Catherine McCarthy

This past summer we were fortunate to be able to hire Garnet McLaughlin and his company Cobequid Trail Consulting to fix our tilted composting toilet and improve access to the building. The toilet had been installed last year but within a month of installation, heavy rains and poor drainage lifted the unit out of the ground. The toilet is level again, and the access trail and drainage system is rebuilt.

Garnet and his crew also repaired the trails in and around the Hugonin Perrin Estate and the Victorian Gardens, following the old carriage roads and trails laid out in century-old maps. Access to the Teahouse upper terrace is now via the old road to the south of the Teahouse near the end of the lower field.

Earlier this year arborists from the International Society of Arboriculturalists pruned and repaired 100 year-old trees and shrubs in the gardens making the area an ideal place for bird watching and relaxation. The Friends of McNabs will plant some shrubs along the base of the hill below the Teahouse to discourage people from scrambling up the steep bank.



Volunteers with the Friends of McNabs installing park benches

Volunteers with the Friends of McNabs installed seven more park benches on McNabs this summer. We bought the benches from NS Natural Resources and plan to sell them as commemorative benches with plaques, which will be a good fundraiser for the society.

Unfortunately, 2 of the 8 benches that we paid for were taken and moved before we could stake and anchor them in the ground. Last year, two of the four benches that we bought were also taken. One of them was painted camouflage colours and placed out at Hugonin Point. We have no idea who would do such a thing, but suspect that the camouflaged bench might have been used as a blind for illegal hunting on the island. The camouflaged bench was recovered, has been repainted and now sits along

Garrison Road near Fort Ives. Two of the other benches taken were placed at Wreck Cove and one placed near the Brow Hill Trail.

Volunteers also repaired the old shed behind the Teahouse. It is a great place to store our garden supplies, and materials needed for the composting toilet. Unfortunately, the shed was broken into recently and the woodchips needed for the composting toilet were scattered about.

It is really too bad that such vandalism and negative energy can't be turned around toward helping us maintain the composting toilet, trails and park benches for everyone who loves McNabs Island to enjoy.



Teahouse Lane winds its way past the Clivus Multrum composting toilet.

## Minister of Natural Resources Visits McNabs Island

By Catherine McCarthy



Charlie and Marilyn Parker in front of the Matthew Lynch House

On May 28th McNabs Island has special visitors – Minister Charlie Parker and his wife Marilyn, who joined us for a tour. The Minister, who holds two government portfolios, took time from his vacation to visit McNabs.

The Parkers, who are avid birders and naturalists, were not disappointed. They were saddened by the sorry state of the historic Conrad and Lynch houses but marvelled at the work that the arborists and the Friends have done to restore the Hugonin-Perrin Victorian Gardens. The Parkers used to own a nursery and garden centre and are very familiar with the varieties of trees and shrubs introduced to the island over a century ago. Many

of the trees and shrubs were in full bloom that day and the Parkers, equipped with binoculars, got to witness songbirds vying for the nectar of English Hawthorn blossoms.

Let's hope that with the Minister's interest in the island, more progress to restore the trails, houses and park infrastructure can come to McNabs Island.



Natural Resources Minister Charlie Parker holds an American Toad found on McNabs Island

### Membership Information

Membership to the Friends of McNabs Island Society is due at the end of each calendar year. Membership includes a year's subscription to the society's newsletter, **The Rucksack**, and discounts on charter boat trips to our major island events.

The society is a registered charity: CCRA number 88847 4194 RR 0001. All contributes are tax deductible. For membership inquiries, contact Lyn Underhill at [mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca](mailto:mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca) or (902) 444-7482.

#### Annual Membership Rates:

Individual \$20, Family \$25, Supporting Member \$75, Sustaining Member \$150

Please send cheque payable to:  
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**The Rucksack** is published by the Friends of McNabs Island Society. If you would like to help us save on printing and postage and prefer to receive the electronic version of the newsletter, please contact us.

For information on McNabs Island and the society, visit [www.mcnabsisland.ca](http://www.mcnabsisland.ca) or contact Cathy (902) 434-2254 (evenings) or email [mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca](mailto:mcnabs@chebucto.ns.ca).

Contributions, ideas and feedback are welcome!

Thank you for your continued support!

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