

Landmark islands protected forever

Snake, Salmon Islands bequeathed as EcoGifts

By KTW Staff

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Snake and Salmon Islands, two important landmarks off shore from Kingston, have been donated to the Land Conservancy for Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington by the late Dr. James Day and Mr. Robert Carson.

The small islands are located about two kilometres south of Lemoine Point and are familiar to local boaters. The islands have been a site for colonial waterbird research for many years, and Environment Canada has recognized the donation as an EcoGift under its ecological gifts program.

"We are so pleased to accept this wonderful gift," says Mary Alice Snetsinger, a conservation biologist on the Land Conservancy board. "The donors wanted to conserve the natural features of the islands and to protect them from future development and loss of natural value. Preserving and protecting natural areas is our goal, too, so the donors came to us."

Snetsinger notes that thanks to generous donations, the Land Conservancy now owns four properties in the area.

The islands will be left alone for now with a possibility of some stewardship activities in the future.

"The islands are off-limits to the public except with our permission. We will be monitoring the islands and allowing the research on the birds that nest there to continue."

Snake and Salmon Islands are unusual in the Kingston region, being two of very few offshore islands at the east end of Lake Ontario.

Snake Island, 0.19 hectares (0.46 acres) in size, located 2km off Carruthers Point, is of importance to nesting colonial waterbirds and for fish spawning, particularly by Lake Trout. Nesting cormorants have had an impact on the island vegetation, and all trees have succumbed to their presence. About 60 pairs of nesting Herring Gull and approximately 500 pairs of Double-crested Cormorants, have been observed on the island, although the number of nests has dropped to around 300.

Salmon Island — 0.1 hectares (0.25 acres) located 2 km south of Lemoine Point — is of importance to nesting colonial waterbirds and for fish spawning, particularly by Lake Trout. Although there were once trees on Salmon Island, the rocky island now has only a few shrubs, the trees having succumbed to high water levels that occurred some years ago.

About 75 pairs of nesting Herring Gulls have been seen on the island.

The Land Conservancy was established in June 2004 with the purpose of protecting natural sites and landscapes in Kingston and Frontenac and Lennox and Addington counties. Its goal is to "Keep nature near ... always".

The Land Conservancy has a stewardship fund endowed with the Community Foundation of Kingston and Area. Anyone wishing to make a donation to celebrate this donation and assist with the islands' long-term protection may send it to CFKA, 165 Ontario Street, Kingston, K7L 2Y6, for the Natural Areas Protection Fund.