

# Walking Lightly on Beaches, Cliffs & Dunes

<u>Code of Care</u>	<u>Why it's Important</u>
<b>Leave your vehicle behind</b>	ATVs and dirt bikes driving on the dunes kill the vegetation that holds the fragile sand structure together. Without it, the sand blows away, creating gaps in the dune. Over time, the height of the dunes diminish and there is less protection for the land and communities that lie behind. On the beach above the high-water mark, vehicles may drive over nests or young, flightless birds. On a cliff edge, they damage the roots that stabilize the soils that lie over the bedrock.
<b>Keep pets on leash</b>	Many of our coastal birds nest on the ground on beaches, sand-spits and in nearby marshlands. Dogs love to run free but they can and do destroy nests and kill young flightless birds. They also waste the precious energy of birds that are fuelling up for a long-distance migration; that loss adds up quickly over the course of many days spent repeatedly avoiding well-fed and playful dogs.
<b>Pack out what you pack in</b>	All garbage has an impact by changing wildlife behaviour, damaging plants, contributing to plastic debris at sea, and diminishing other beach goers' experience. Food garbage attracts scavengers that will also prey on eggs and young birds if the opportunity arises.
<b>Leave what you find</b>	The natural materials on the beach contribute to the ecosystem there. It is all habitat for something and can help to capture sand and build dunes on the north shore.
<b>Give wildlife space</b>	Wildlife is placed at risk when they habituate to people, particularly when they begin to associate them with easy food. They also have no extra energy to attend to people when they're raising young or getting ready for a long and arduous migration.
<b>Stay on the trail</b>	Taking shortcuts through dunes increases the damage to dune structure and surrounding vegetation. Utilizing designated trails and preferably boardwalks will help decrease the impact on the dune itself and the wildlife that may be nesting there.



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**BIRD STUDIES CANADA**  
ÉTUDES D'OISEAUX

**IBA**  
BIRDLIFE IMPORTANT BIRD  
AND BIODIVERSITY AREA



# Share the Shore: Working with Nature to Protect PEI's Beautiful Coast

In Prince Edward Island, you are never far away from the sound of the waves or the fresh smell of sea air. We have over 800 km of coastline and a further 2,400 km of shores in our protected estuaries. To east, north, south and west a new and subtly different coastal landscape creates a feast for the eyes.



The salt marsh at Tracadie Bay  
Important Bird Area, Tracadie PE

Residents and visitors alike love this beautiful place and many feel a deep connection to it, as a place to play and sometimes as a place to work. The estuaries are an important resource for the shellfish industry and there are many nearshore fisheries around the Island that are linked to our coastline (Irish moss, lobster, snow crab).

The sandstone cliffs, sandy and cobble beaches and north shore dunes all form part of an extensive and ever-changing linked ecosystem. While inland mountains and prairies change slowly over geological time, we can see many changes to the Island coastline happening over the course of our lifetimes. This is a natural process, driven by winds, tides and waves. The cliffs erode and feed sand to the beaches. Woody debris and seaweed on the beaches collect sand and build dunes or coastal plains. In this way, the land in eroding cliffs is not lost, just repurposed.



An endangered Piping Plover  
nesting on PEI's north shore

The coastlines of PEI are also rich with wildlife. Many beaches, cliffs and estuaries are home to ground-nesting birds that stop at this point on the Atlantic migratory flyway to rear young every summer. Much of the coast is internationally recognized as Important Bird Areas because of the rich habitat mix of salt marsh wetland, beach barrier ponds, sandspits and barrier islands scattered along our coast.



Important Bird Areas - Important Bird  
Areas on Prince Edward Island are depicted  
in orange in the above map.


Our dynamic and fragile coastline faces many challenges. Sea level has been rising around the Island for 8,000 years and continues to rise at an accelerated pace now. Strong storm surges and less ice in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in recent years put pressure on shorelines and in some instances can change the shape of the shore very quickly. Our efforts to control or manage those forces often have unintended consequences. Please consider the fragility of these beautiful landscapes while you're here and walk lightly on this land.

If you would like more information on PEI's coastline, Important Bird Areas or Island Nature Trust, please get in touch using any of the contact options listed below.

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