

To Reach the Park

McNabs Island is accessible by commercial or private boat from Dartmouth, Eastern Passage and Purcell's Cove. The trip takes up to 25 minutes from downtown Halifax, or 10 minutes from Eastern Passage. Contact the visitor information centre at Historic Properties or Eastern Passage for information about transportation schedules and fees.



FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Parks and Recreation Division
Department of Natural Resources
RR # 1, Belmont, Nova Scotia
B0M 1C0
(902) 662-3030
<http://parks.gov.ns.ca>

Department of Natural Resources
2115 Waverley Road
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Parks Canada
(902) 426-5080

Friends of McNabs Island Society
(902) 434-2254 (evenings)

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McNabs & Lawlor Islands

PROVINCIAL PARK



NOVA SCOTIA
Natural Resources

McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park located at the mouth of Halifax Harbour, carries visitors back in time, and back to nature. Just a short boat trip from various points in the metro area, military and history buffs, birders, and hikers will be enthralled with this park's intriguing past and beautiful natural surroundings so close to the dynamic downtown. McNabs, comprised of 400 ha (1000 acres), presents a combination of historical and natural features. Lawlor Island is intended as a natural area, and is not open to the public. Fort McNab, a national historic site operated by Parks Canada, is situated on McNabs Island.

Cultural History Various evidence, including a 1500 year-old shell midden, indicates a Mi'kmaq presence on the island long before the Europeans.

The French used the island as a fishing centre during the 1690s and planned to establish a settlement here. However, when mainland Nova Scotia was ceded to the British in 1713, the French concentrated their efforts on Fortress Louisbourg.

When Edward Cornwallis established Halifax as a British settlement in 1749, he granted most of McNabs Island to his nephews. In 1782, Peter McNab purchased the island for £1000. Under the McNab family, much of the island's forests were cleared and tenant farms were established. The McNabs remained a presence on the island for over 150 years.

Beginning in the 1860s, the British Admiralty purchased land from the McNab family to establish Ives Point Battery, Fort McNab and the Hugonin Battery to better defend Halifax.

McNabs Island has long been a popular recreational destination. During the 19th century, thousands came from the

city to attend picnics and socials. This trend continued until the 1920s, when Bill Lynch who had bought one of the island's fair grounds, took the fair off the island and created his popular touring midway shows.

During First and Second World Wars, the military installed searchlights on the island to patrol the harbour, and laid submarine nets between the island and the mainland.

In the 1960s, the military transferred most of their holdings on the island to Parks Canada. In 1974, the Province began acquiring land for the creation of a provincial park. By 2000, Parks Canada transferred all but Fort McNab to the Province. Today, less than one per cent of the island is privately owned.



Fort Ives

The islands are located at the mouth of the Halifax Harbour.

Natural History

McNabs is comprised of glacial deposits of rock and earth, known as drumlins, overlaid on slate and granite bedrock. The island's shoreline varies from cobbled stone to fine sand, with salt marshes in a few sheltered coves.

In the 1880s, Frederick Perrin, a keen gardener, introduced several hundred plant species to his Victorian estate on the island. Many of these trees and shrubs are still standing.

Those areas cleared in the 1700 and 1800s are forested again. Abandoned farm fields have become colonized by white spruce. In September 2003, Hurricane Juan caused extensive damage to the island. Trees were uprooted and the causeway to the Maugers Beach Lighthouse was breached. As a result McNabs Pond became a tidal pond.

Deer, coyotes and other animals inhabit the island, and over 206 bird species, including nesting raptors such as osprey, have been documented here.



Features of Interest

- **Ives Point** An anchor point for a First World War submarine net, offers panoramic views of Halifax Harbour.
- **Fort Ives** Built in 1864, was updated in the 1890s, and again during the First World War. It features two rifled muzzle-loading guns in their original casements.
- **Indian Point** Takes its name from the Mi'kmaq people, who were forced to relocate there by the British in 1760.
- **Conrad House** Summer home of A.J. Davis. Later the residence of Gladys Conrad, the island's last full-time resident.
- **Matthew Lynch House** Home of Bill Lynch, the midway king.
- **Hugonin Battery** Constructed in 1899-1900, was used by the Department of National Defence as an acoustic monitoring station until 1993. Site is off-limits to visitors.
- **A.J. Davis Soda Pop Factory** Operated before and during Prohibition producing soda pop as well as a special concoction called "Pure McNab".
- **The Tea House** (closed) was built in the 1980s on the site of the former Hugonin-Perrin estate.
- **Maugers Beach** Named for Captain Joshua Mauger, a merchant and ships provisioner, who acquired five acres here for drying and processing fish.
- **Maugers Beach Lighthouse** Built during the Second World War on the site of Sherbrooke Tower, a military tower that was completed in 1828 and later adapted as a lighthouse. In 1852 Dr. Abraham Gesner used his new kerosene fuel to operate the lighthouse for a trial period.
- **Hangman's Beach** Used by the British Admiralty to hang deserters. The bodies were left hanging as a warning to sailors considering desertion.
- **Back (Wreck) Cove** The final resting place of several scuttled ships. A favourite picnic and recreational area for boaters.
- **Fort McNab** Built in 1889, was the first fortification in Halifax to use breech-loading guns, making it the most powerful fort to guard the city.

McNabs & Lawlor Islands Provincial Park

- Pit Toilets
- Walking Trail
- Lighthouse
- Anchorage

A Special Message to Park Visitors

McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park has limited services. Drinking water is not available on the island. Pit toilets are situated at several locations. The weather tends to be variable and cooler than on the nearby mainland.

There are no waste management facilities on the island. Pack-in and pack-out garbage and recyclables.

PARK SAFETY

- Help preserve and protect this beautiful park for the enjoyment of future generations. Plants, animals and rocks are an important part of its natural heritage. Please do not damage or remove them.
- Bicycles are restricted to the main roads; motorized vehicles are prohibited.
- Please keep pets on a leash at all times.
- Firearms are prohibited in the park.

PERSONAL SAFETY

- Beaches, old forts, wharves and other ruins may contain hazards. Explore with caution.
- Visit the island at your own risk. There are no emergency facilities or telephone. In the event of an emergency, use a cell phone to contact 911.



Maugers Beach