

## Visitor Notes

McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park has limited services. Enjoy your visit, but keep the following in mind:

- Visitors are required to **'Leave No Trace'** and 'pack-in, pack-out' garbage and recyclables.
- Dress for the weather and wear suitable footwear for rough terrain.
- There are several composting and outhouse toilets on the island.
- **Drinking water is not available** and beaches are not supervised.
- **Ticks** that carry Lyme disease are on the island. Use insect repellent and check for ticks after your visit.
- Visit the island **at your own risk**. There are no emergency facilities or telephones.

## Provincial Park Regulations

- Campfires and BBQs are not permitted on McNabs Island.
- Dogs must be on leash at all times.
- Smoking tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol consumption are prohibited.
- Motorized vehicles and hunting are prohibited.
- Bicycles, including mountain bikes, are restricted to Garrison Road.
- Do not damage trees or plants, disturb any ruins, or remove any artifacts from the island.
- The campsite is currently closed.
- For park enforcement call 1-800-565-2224
- **In the event of an EMERGENCY call 911.**

The Friends of McNabs Island Society, established in 1990, is a volunteer-run, non-profit, registered charity, based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, dedicated to the preservation of McNabs and Lawlor Islands as parkland.

The Friends of McNabs Island Society promotes McNabs Island as a Natural Environment Park and 'Outdoor Classroom'. The Friends provide visitor information, host beach cleanups, guided tours and special events. The Society maintains trails and manages the Teahouse Outdoor Education Centre which is open seasonally.

To get involved, contact:  
[info@mcnabsisland.ca](mailto:info@mcnabsisland.ca)

## Getting to McNabs Island

McNabs Island is accessible by private boat or commercial service from Eastern Passage, Halifax, Dartmouth and Northwest Arm. There is NO regularly scheduled service. For details visit:  
[mcnabsisland.ca/getting\\_here](http://mcnabsisland.ca/getting_here)



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The "Green Jewel"  
of Halifax Harbour

# McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park



FRIENDS OF  
McNABS ISLAND SOCIETY  
[mcnabsisland.ca](http://mcnabsisland.ca)



## Discover the 'Green Jewel' of Halifax Harbour

McNabs Island, the larger of the two islands in McNabs and Lawlor Islands Provincial Park, is 400 hectares in size and nearly 5 km long. It presents an outstanding collection of natural and historical features, combined with recreational and educational opportunities.

### Wild McNabs

McNabs Island is an oasis of natural beauty, tranquility, woodlands and shorelines in the middle of a busy urban setting. This 'green jewel' contains a number of habitats, each with its own unique vegetation and wildlife, including stands of beech trees, open fields, wetlands and sandy and cobbled beaches. Cultivated trees and shrubs planted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century continue to flourish. Over 206 species of birds have been recorded on the island.



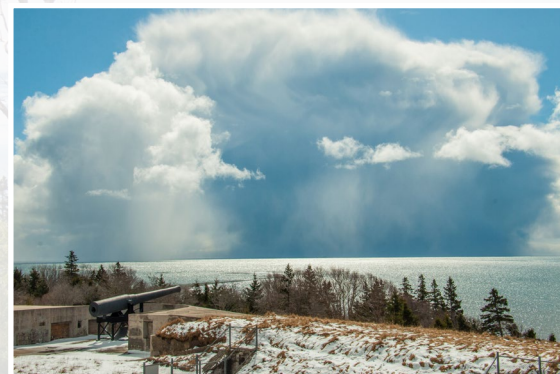
### An Island Shaped by People

A shell midden, or mound, dating back 5,000 years tells us that the Mi'kmaq camped and fished along the shores of McNabs Island (Mniku'j) long before the Europeans arrived. During the 1690s, the French used the island as a fishing station. When the British arrived in 1749, Edward Cornwallis granted the island to his nephews. In 1782, Peter McNab purchased the island and built a home there. The McNab Family remained a presence on the island for 150 years.



## A Destination for Recreation

McNabs Island has always been a destination for relaxation and fun. In 1762, the Halifax Quits Club established their playing field at Ives Point. The island boasted two popular pleasure grounds where people played games, danced, picnicked, and enjoyed a steam-powered merry-go-round. Today, visitors come to McNabs Island to unwind and soak in the island's nature and beauty. You can enjoy the many opportunities the island has to offer, participate in a field trip, guided tour, or join the Friends of McNabs Island and help with our many island projects.



## Halifax Harbour Defence

McNabs Island was not always the tranquil place it is today. With its strategic location at the entrance to Halifax Harbour, the island played a vital role in the defence of Halifax from the early 1800s until the Cold War of the 1950s. The first fortification was Sherbrooke Tower, a Martello tower constructed in the early 1800s. It was later converted to a lighthouse and was used by Abraham Gesner to test his invention kerosene in 1851. In the 1860s, the British built Fort Ives, followed by Fort McNab in the 1880s, and Hugonin Battery in 1899. Strawberry Battery, which is not accessible to visitors, was built by the Canadian military during the Second World War.



## Lighthouses and Shipwrecks

As you approach McNabs Island, the first thing you see is the Maugher Beach Lighthouse built in 1941 near the Sherbrooke Tower site. The other island lighthouse, McNabs Island Rear Range Lighthouse built in 1903, was replaced by skeleton towers in 1979. The waters surrounding the island became the graveyard for many ships. In 1797, *HMS Tribune* struck Thrumcap Shoal and sank off Herring Cove with the loss of 228 lives. Over the centuries, numerous ships were scuttled around the island. Wrecks in Ives and Wreck coves are still visible at low tide today.

## Our Changing Island

McNabs Island is ever changing. Ocean warming caused by climate change has increased sea levels. Changing weather patterns have caused more intense storms. This in turn, has increased the rate of erosion of the shoreline. Marine pollution from plastics, old tires, and 'ghost gear' from the fishing industry wash up on the beaches. In spite of these impacts, McNabs and Lawlor islands are surrounded by a vibrant marine environment.

McNabs Island highlights many of the changes affecting Nova Scotia's marine and coastal ecosystems. This dynamic outdoor classroom on the city's doorstep invites you to explore the many interacting processes that shape the island.



**NATURE**

- **Maugher Beach** is a beautiful sandy beach great for swimming, beach combing and enjoying the sunset.
- In 2003, Hurricane Juan caused a breach in Lighthouse Road allowing the tide to rush into **McNabs Pond**. The pond, now a tidal estuary, is a stop-over for migrating birds, and one of the island's favorite birding areas.
- **Invasive species** Japanese Knotweed, and more recently, Japanese Beetle, have migrated to McNabs Island. The island is also home to endangered Barn Swallows, which nest at Fort McNab.

**SETTLEMENT**

- The **Mi'kmaq** fished, hunted, and camped on McNabs Island (Mniku'j) long before Europeans arrived.
- **Peter McNab** purchased the island in 1782. The **McNab Family Cemetery** located within the boundaries of Fort McNab, is the final resting place for some of the McNab family and other island residents.
- The **Hugonin-Perrin Estate**, with its English Garden, makes a wonderful picnic spot.
- The historic **Davis-Conrad** and **Matthew Lynch** houses are owned by the Province and part of the park.

**RECREATION**

- McNabs Island has a colourful recreational history. It's been an escape from the city for centuries.
- McNabs Island was the location of two fairgrounds. Bill Lynch purchased Finlay's Picnic Grounds in the 1920s, moved it off the island to create the **Bill Lynch Shows**.
- The **Teahouse** located close to Garrison Pier has now been transformed into an **Outdoor Education Centre**.
- The Friends of McNabs Island organize island events such as the beach cleanups and guided tours.

**FORTIFICATIONS**

- McNabs Island played a key role in the defence of Halifax. Many fortifications and military structures remain.
- Construction of **Fort Ives** began in 1865. During the First World War, 800 servicemen were stationed there. Two of its 10-inch guns are still in their original positions.
- **Fort McNab** was built for the largest gun ever mounted in Halifax. It is now a National Historic Site managed by Parks Canada, and offers a spectacular view of the approach to Halifax Harbour.

**LIGHTHOUSES AND SHIPWRECKS**

- The only lighthouse remaining on McNabs today is the **Maugher Beach Lighthouse**, which greets every ship that passes into Halifax Harbour. It's not easily accessible because of the breach in Lighthouse Road.
- The ruins of the **McNabs Island Rear Range Lighthouse** are visible off Old Military Road.
- The tragedy of cholera aboard the **SS England**, which was quarantined off Finlay Cove in 1866, left an indelible mark on the island. Many victims were buried at Hugonin Point and Little Thrumcap.

**OUR CHANGING OCEAN AND ISLAND**

- **Climate Change** and sea level rise accelerate shoreline changes. The erosion of the **Maugher Beach** sand dunes and the headlands at **Hugonin Point** are visible to visitors.
- The Friends of McNabs Island organize annual **beach cleanups** collecting about 500 bags of garbage each year.
- The **marine environment** surrounding the island includes regular sightings of **seals** and **osprey** diving for fish. Occasionally whales and even sharks can be spotted offshore.