The Network of Important Bird Areas in Québec, Canada

For BirdLife International by Edward Cheskey, Nature Canada
February, 2010
Executive Summary

The purpose of this article is to explore the emerging Important Bird Area (IBA) Caretaker Network in Québec within the Canadian context with the goal of furthering our understanding of what makes, motivates and inspires Caretakers, what opportunities and challenges they face, and the values of having an IBA Caretaker Network. Primary data was gathered during interviews and meetings with prospective caretakers and people involved in stewardship in five Québec IBAs. Data from the interviews was analyzed and considered in the context of the Canadian IBA Program including the IBA Caretaker Network in British Columbia.

Six common threads emerged from the interviews including: the key coordinating role of Nature Québec; the value of having conservation plans or other designations already in place to orient on-the-ground activities; the passion and skills of people involved in IBAs; a strong interest in being an IBA Caretaker; the value of networking with other IBA Caretakers; and the identification of common challenges and ways to address them.

Appendices include detailed notes on the interviews with Nature Québec and the local people at the five IBAs, a summary of an evaluation of the BC IBA Caretaker Network, and a history of the National IBA Program.
Table of Contents

Acknowledgements ......................................................................................................................... 2
Introduction ..................................................................................................................................... 3
Discussion ........................................................................................................................................ 4
  Background on Canadian Program ............................................................................................... 4
  From IBA Stewardship to IBA Caretakers in Québec ................................................................. 6
  Common Threads from Interviews .............................................................................................. 7
Conclusions .................................................................................................................................... 16
Appendix 1. Questions posed to potential Caretakers in Quebec IBAs, October 2009 .............. 18
Appendix 2. Interview with Anne-Marie Turgeon, Nature Québec, on the Provincial Program . 19
Appendix 3. Case Studies of Five IBAs in Québec ........................................................................ 23
Appendix 4. British Columbia IBA Caretaker Network ............................................................... 38
Appendix 5 National IBA Program Background ......................................................................... 40
References ..................................................................................................................................... 42

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank David Thomas at BirdLife International for providing funding for travel to conduct interviews at five IBAs in Québec and with staff responsible for the IBA program at Nature Québec, particularly Anne-Marie Turgeon. Anne-Marie and I are grateful for the time, experiences and frankness of those participating in interviews and meetings in the five Quebec Important Bird Areas listed in Appendix 3. Thanks also go to Anne Murray from BC Nature for providing comments on the BC Nature Caretaker Network.

All photos are by Ted Cheskey, except for the following:
  Page 32 by Anne-Marie Turgeon
  Page 35 by Denise Moreau
  Page 36 by Association des amis du cap Tourmente (ACT)
  Page 37 by Jacques Dussault
1. Introduction

Late October, 2009. A very large and noisy flock of Greater Snow Geese wheels in from the east, then settles into the bay. Their silhouettes flash white against the background of the disappearing day. Jean-Étienne, an enthusiastic educator, expert birder, and project manager at the local ZIP (ZIP = Zone d'Intervention Prioritaire) explains with passion why the Pointe-au-Père IBA should be expanded to include virtually all of the bay of Rimouski, which lies outside the current IBA boundaries. The geese choose to land in an area well outside the official boundaries, but clearly within the zone Jean-Étienne is recommending be part of the IBA, as if to place an exclamation mark on his point. He is a natural “Caretaker,” though the Caretaker Network is in its nascent stage in Québec.

Point-au-Père is one of 96 IBAs in Québec, and approximately 600 IBAs in Canada. Québec IBAs are largely concentrated along the thousands of kilometres of provincial coastline, be they on Hudson Bay, Hudson Strait, Ungava Bay, the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence or the Saint Lawrence River itself. Québec is big, three times the land mass of France. Most of the IBAs are in remote, sparsely populated areas, and the vast majority are designated for supporting large concentrations of either migratory or colonial birds. Fifty-seven are global congregatory sites, and two are identified for supporting threatened species (Bicknell’s Thrush).

Interviewing Jean-Étienne was part of an exploration of the IBA program in Québec in general, and more specifically the first step of testing the waters for the application of the Caretaker Network concept to the Québec context in Canada. At the simplest level, Caretakers are people
or groups of people who care for an IBA by making a commitment to visit the site on a regular basis and report on its state. We were hoping to glean some nuggets of wisdom from people like Jean-Étienne, who are involved in Québec IBAs, which could help inform the development of the Network in Québec and the rest of Canada. Specifically, we wanted to understand what motivates those individuals involved in IBA stewardship and monitoring, what value they attributed to participating in a “network” of caretakers, what role the provincial and national partners could play to support them, and whether they currently saw themselves as official caretakers of their respective IBAs.

Extensive interviews were held by myself and Anne-Marie Turgeon, biologist and Manager of the IBA program for Nature Québec in late October 2009 in five different Québec IBAs with key people, including Jean-Étienne, who are involved in stewardship, monitoring and outreach activities. In total, we talked with 13 people, in free-flowing discussions that addressed a series of predetermined questions.\(^1\) I also had extensive discussions with Anne-Marie to capture Nature Québec’s perspective on the Caretaker Network in Québec.\(^2\) Notes and audio transcripts from the interviews were kept from each interview, which are the basis of this report.\(^3\) Interviews were also conducted earlier this year with a small number of Caretakers from British Columbia, the results of which are also presented to provide context.\(^4\)

This article will further explore the emerging IBA Caretaker Network in Québec within the Canadian context with the goal of furthering our understanding of what makes, motivates and inspires Caretakers, what opportunities and challenges they face, and the values of having an IBA Caretaker Network.

### 2. Discussion

#### 2.1 Background on Canadian Program

Understanding the Québec IBA program and where Caretakers fit requires some context.\(^5\) IBAs were introduced to Canada in 1996 by Nature Canada and Bird Studies Canada, BirdLife International’s Canadian partners.\(^6\) The initial five years of the program focused on site identification and conservation planning in some of the newly minted IBAs. The site identification effort involved engaging birders and naturalists across the country, as well as the relevant civil servants from the Canadian Wildlife Service and provincial equivalents. The Federal government was a significant sponsor of this initial effort.\(^7\) Approximately 600 sites were awarded designation as global, continental or national IBAs. One hundred and forty received attention from conservation planners engaged by provincial partners of Nature Canada.

---

\(^1\) See Appendix 1 for a list of questions posed during the interviews in Québec.

\(^2\) See Appendix 2 for a transcript of the interview with Anne-Marie Turgeon of Nature Québec.

\(^3\) See Appendix 3 for summaries of the key quotes from interview participants in the five Québec IBAs.

\(^4\) See Appendix 4 for a description of the British Columbia IBA program evaluation.

\(^5\) See Appendix 5 for a description and history of the Canadian IBA program and the national partners.

\(^6\) Unlike most countries, Canada has two organizations sharing the role as official BirdLife partners. Nature Canada and BSC have complimentary mandates and skill sets, allowing for effective implementation of the IBA program in Canada.

\(^7\) Specifically, the funds came largely from the federal government’s “Millennium” funding program.
to develop conservation plans. In Canada, IBAs are not legally protected unless the IBA boundaries coincide with an existing protected area. Over half of the IBAs fall outside of protected areas, meaning efforts to protect them must come from private stewardship and community involvement.

After 2002 the major funding from the Federal Government ended, and the IBA program was greatly diminished, with the exception being Nature Canada’s Communities in Action program which secured and transferred about CAD$1 million in support of over 200 local conservation and education projects at IBAs over several years.

In 2007, BC Nature introduced and implemented a Caretaker Network in British Columbia through their own network of naturalists and naturalist organizations. Their initiative was extremely successful in attracting Caretakers, in part through personal contacts and also by keeping the expectations and basic responsibilities to simply updating site summaries and visiting and reporting on habitat conditions in the IBA annually. In 2008 and 2009, new life was breathed into the National IBA program through the success of BC Nature in developing and implementing the BC IBA Caretaker Program, and also through reflecting on the shortcomings of the national program since 2002. By the summer of 2009, about 90% of the BC IBAs already had assigned Caretakers. National partners provided BC Nature with some financial support to produce basic outreach materials and establish the elements for reporting and data management. The success of BC was contagious.

In the rest of Canada, there were obvious needs to update site summaries and species information on IBAs, revise some boundaries, and consider new sites. There was also an imperative to make some progress in bird conservation efforts, given the dismal trend
information trickling in on Canadian species. In the short period of time since the IBA Program’s introduction to Canada, pressures and threats had left their mark on some sites, compromising habitat and undermining population viability. Seeing both the popularity and success of BC Caretakers, learning about similar initiatives in other jurisdictions, and realizing the conservation imperative to revitalize this program, the national partners secured significant funding from various sources to reanimate the National IBA Program around the concept of building and supporting a national IBA Caretaker Network.

These efforts led to development of the Important Bird Areas Master Plan for Canada, developed by the national partners over two years with input from regional partners. The plan identifies roles and responsibilities, as well as program goals and targets for site assessment and monitoring, data management, awareness building and conservation action.

The funds also permitted the expansion of the IBA Caretaker Network into four additional provinces: Alberta, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Québec. In the spring of 2009, representatives from the lead organizations in each province and the national partners met for an intensive two day planning workshop to map out the key priorities and steps for the continued development of the IBA program across Canada and specifically the development of a national IBA Caretaker Network. At this meeting, a national steering committee was formed (the IBA Canada Committee) to provide oversight and guidance to the national program. All of the partners are represented on this committee.

3. From IBA Stewardship to IBA Caretakers in Québec

While the Caretaker Network concept is new in Québec, Nature Québec has maintained an IBA profile in Québec since 2002 by focusing support on 15 high priority IBAs along the Saint Lawrence waterway. Through a variety of funding sources including the Fondation de la faune du Québec, Nature Canada, and the Federal Ministry of Fisheries and Oceans, Nature Québec has maintained part-time staffing to coordinate an IBA program in la belle province since 2002. These funds have also supported on-the-ground conservation activities ranging from stewardship and outreach such as installing interpretive signage, to continued efforts in community conservation planning in some key sites and the development of provincial-level resources.

This exploration of the Québec IBAs took place at a turning point at which the “old” program focusing on promoting conservation activities in 15 priority IBAs along the Saint Lawrence River and Gulf of Saint Lawrence is being transformed into a new program with the focus on IBA Caretakers throughout the province. New funding has permitted a full-time provincial manager, Anne-Marie Turgeon, to lead this transformation for Nature Québec. Our site visits to five IBAs in late October 2009 was part of this transformative process.

Each site visited had expressed interest in the IBA Caretaker program before we arrived, and had its own unique history. Some of the IBAs had conservation plans developed between 2002 and 2007. Others had strong and dedicated people involved in some aspect of the site. As

---

8 See Butcher, 2007.
such, this late October trip was multi-purpose: it served as a fact-finding trip to assess the level of interest and engagement of people involved locally in their IBA and whether local people felt part of a larger network in Québec or Canada; also, we wanted to present the new “IBA Caretaker” program and hopefully recruit Caretakers for their IBAs.

Our route took us from Québec City (the provincial capital⁹) to Sept-Îles on the north shore of the Saint Lawrence, then across the Gulf to Rimouski, and back to Québec, with stops at the Tadoussac IBA, the Sept-Îles IBA, the Pointe-au-Père IBA (near Rimouski), the Battures de Beauport IBA in Québec City) and the Cap Tourmente IBA (50 kilometres northeast of Québec City).

Map showing the route that we travelled and IBAs that we visited in preparing this article

4. Common Threads from Interviews

Analysis of the interviews led to identifying six common threads connecting the people and organizations that comprise the new Caretaker Network in Québec: the provincial coordination of Nature Québec, the existence of conservation plans to orient activities, the passion and skills of the people at the IBAs, their interest in being Caretakers, the value of networking, and finally the challenges that they face. These common themes resonated during interviews, and resembled that emerged from the evaluation of BC Caretakers discussed in Appendix 4.

¹⁹ In Québec City, one observes signs advertising Québec City as the “National Capital.” This reflects the provincial politics and the distinctive francophone culture in Québec that is considered a “nation” in the broadest sense.
4.1. Coordinating role of Nature Québec, the regional IBA leader

Nature Québec (www.naturequebec.org) has led in the development and implementation of the IBA program in Québec. They are the glue that holds the program together. Nature Québec is a francophone non-governmental non-profit organization that delivers a variety of nature conservation and environmental programs.

Under the tutelage of Nature Québec, and through a variety of funding sources, approximately 15 of the 96 IBAs have received funding support for local projects since 2002. This support has generated a good relationship between the local organizations and the provincial organization.

Nature Québec has focused its efforts on conservation planning and actions in IBAs, and also on building public awareness around IBAs in the most populated parts of Québec along the St. Lawrence River and the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Pointe-au-Père is one example of an IBA that has received financial support from Nature Québec to undertake conservation work defined and determined locally, and is one of a handful of excellent candidate sites to integrate into the new Caretaker Network program.

In 2009, Nature Québec signed an agreement with the national partners to deliver the IBA Caretaker Network in Québec. This has meant increasing the internal capacity of Nature Québec for the IBA program (full-time manager) and developing work plans to guide the transition of the Québec program from conservation planning and actions and funding local initiatives, to a more systematic Caretaker program. Nature Québec continues to cultivate the relationship with local groups through events such as their annual Workshop on Conservation of Natural Areas; in 2010 IBA groups are invited and a special breakfast will be offered to newly recruited and potential IBA Caretakers.

Nature Québec looks to expand the IBA Caretaker Network in Québec far beyond the current 15 IBAs to engage Caretakers in most of the provincial IBAs and attain the national target of having 50% of the 96 IBAs with assigned Caretakers by 2014. Achieving this goal will require new partnerships with other provincial-level and national partners to reach beyond the Saint Lawrence. The first key steps to the expanding partnership have been taken with the establishment of a provincial steering committee of key agencies and organizations involved in or connected to bird conservation in Québec, including the provincial and federal governments and provincial bird organizations. This committee will allow synergies to develop with other initiatives such as the Québec Breeding Bird Atlas project, set to start in 2010, and expansion of the Caretaker Network.

Québec faces added challenges when it comes to learning from others outside of the province due to lack of a common language. The national partners and the IBA Canada Committee have adopted the principle of having all national-level resources (such as the national website) available in both English and French. This embrace of bilingualism at the national level and by all of the provincial partners is certainly good news for all, as it will mean that efforts will be made to encourage and foster sharing and exchanges between Québec and other provinces – a relationship which, has been difficult to maintain at times because of the language barrier.

---

10 See the Interview with Anne-Marie Turgeon in Appendix 1.
11 Many Quebecers do not speak English and a small minority of non-Quebecers speak French.
4.2. The existence of conservation plans or other designations to orient activities

Nature Québec has maintained an IBA program by supporting individuals and groups near IBAs in a range of community conservation projects and through the development of conservation plans. Three of the five IBAs that Anne-Marie and I visited from October 26 - 29, 2009 have existing conservation plans. These plans were developed in collaboration with local people and groups interested in the IBAs, and typically include a detailed description of the site, the socio-economic and biophysical context, qualifications for IBA designation/status (bird information), and the elements of a conservation plan including threats, conservation goals, objectives, actions, responsibilities, and timelines. Therefore, it was no surprise that the people who we interviewed at those three sites (Sept-Îles, Tadoussac and Battures de Beauport) were all familiar with and supportive of their respective conservation plans.

Of the three sites with official IBA conservation plans, Sept-Îles is the most recent (plan publication in 2007) and by far the largest of the IBAs visited, covering over 80 km² of shoreline, bay, and islands including a seabird colony. Because of its size and complexity, numerous groups are involved in different aspects of the IBA from resource management, planning, tourism, outreach, and monitoring. This reality implies an elevated need for collaboration and coordination between various actors in order to make progress on the conservation plan. The topic of coordination of efforts and collaboration was a significant discussion point during our meeting with the IBA “group” from Sept-Îles. In fact, during the meeting it was suggested that an independent IBA organization be founded to shepherd conservation activities within the IBA, though this idea was not widely endorsed.

The Sept-Îles IBA challenge of coordination of efforts between different groups was absent from Tadoussac, where l’Observatoire d’Oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT) is the only group involved, and the conservation plan very much reflects OOT’s own priorities. Tadoussac is a relatively small IBA with less complex issues. At les Battures de Beauport, the situation was somewhere in between. While one organization (through one person) is leading efforts related to the IBA conservation plan, the complex nature of the IBA (a large wetland and tidal zone and recreational area adjacent to a major port, industrial area and large city) and the conservation challenges are much more significant, making progress much slower.

The lack of conservation plans did not appear to make much of a difference in the effectiveness of conservation work in the two other IBAs that we visited, though despite their similarities a closer look revealed some interesting contrasts. At Cap Tourmente, which falls entirely within a federal protected area (National Wildlife Area), and which is owned by the Federal government and has been well resourced through federal monies, the need for conservation planning was low and monitoring of the birds has already been more or less institutionalized. However, in

---

12 See discussion on Sept-Îles in Appendix 2.
13 One person in particular suggested founding a new group. However, a few attendees opposed the idea, so it was rejected.
14 Les Amis du Cap Tourmente have developed a series of bird monitoring trails through the different habitat types with observation posts and standard monitoring protocols. This system has been designed for the public to engage in “citizen science” through bird monitoring. Results are posted on the internet. See Cap Tourmente in Appendix 3.
stark contrast to Cap Tourmente, a small portion of the Pointe-au-Père IBA is also a National Wildlife Area (NWA), but one that receives virtually no resources from the federal government to maintain its modest infrastructure (a series of decrepit display panels).

The nature of activities associated directly with the IBA also reflects this difference. The IBA designation at Cap Tourmente is barely noticed and certainly not a focus of Les Amis du Cap Tourmente, the group that delivers a range of services and activities to the public from facilities provided by the federal government. Long before Cap Tourmente was recognized as an IBA, it was already recognized and protected for its importance for birds – therefore the IBA designation made no real difference from the perspective of conservation. In contrast, at Pointe-au-Père, as described at the beginning of this article, the IBA is a major focus for the manager of the ZIP program for that area. Protecting and expanding the IBA to include adjacent areas to the NWA that also merit recognition is a major priority for his work. The birds have told him\(^\text{15}\) that limiting the boundary of the IBA to the NWA is clearly inadequate from a conservation perspective. In order to do this, he has worked at raising the profile of the IBA within the local community and with local decision makers (e.g., regional government).

4.3. The passion and skills of people involved in IBAs

Over the course of three days, we met people in five different IBAs. In each case, the people we interviewed were involved in some professional way in the IBA. They were relatively young (under 40) and passionate about nature or the environment. Although we were informed that the birding community in Québec is largely male, this did not appear to be the case with the IBAs, where both men and women were involved. In all cases but Sept-Îles, we met with only

\(^{15}\) This comment refers to his indepth study which shows that the IBA birds use areas outside the NWA as much as inside it.
one person; in Sept-Îles, there were ten of us in the Board room at the City Hall (seven women, three men).

Generally the mandates of the organizations and agencies for which the people worked overlapped with an aspect of the particular IBA Conservation plan or the IBA concept. In the case of the port cities of Sept-Îles, Rimouski (Pointe-au-Père IBA), and Beauport (port de Québec), the people involved in the IBA were involved in both protecting the ecosystem that supported the significant bird populations, and also raising awareness and interest in this ecosystem. This work was not necessarily focused on birds, but ecosystem aspects that support the birds such as the Zostère beds that are nurseries to invertebrates, crustaceans and fish and which are key feeding areas for waterfowl and waterbirds. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, which has a mandate to protect coastal fish habitat and the habitats that support marine biological diversity, has been an important supporter of the IBA program in coastal areas for this reason. In some cases there was a perfect correlation between the IBA concept and the work the person was doing (e.g., Tadoussac).

![Image](image.jpg)

A few people involved in the Sept-Îles IBA look out over the vast bay with the seven islands in the background.

Some of the people we met with were skilled field ornithologists (e.g., Tadoussac, Pointe-au-Père), capable of monitoring bird populations, as would eventually be needed for the Caretakers program. However, being a ‘birder’ was not seen as a prerequisite to be involved in the IBA or, for that matter, be a Caretaker. Of greatest importance was knowledge of the area and having a strong connection to it, either through work or a personal pastime or interest. This connection meant that the people/person doing the caretaking would be more able to recognize change, and also that they had a strong motivation to visit the site.

4.4. Interest in being a Caretaker

During our meetings with local people, we explained the IBA Program (which they were generally familiar with), and introduced the Caretaker Network initiative. We described the “job” of a Caretaker in a similar light to the way it was presented in the BC program – visiting the site annually, assessing habitat conditions and revising the site summary.
In all five IBAs, the Caretaker Network concept was greeted with enthusiasm and support. In fact, in all cases but Sept-Îles, people volunteered on the spot to take on the role as Caretakers for their respective IBAs. This outcome was not surprising for Sept-Îles because of its size and complexity. In fact, during the meeting it was agreed that the IBA really needs more than one Caretaker and perhaps a Caretaker coordinator. Even more surprising was the response from Pascal Côté, manager of the Tadoussac Bird Observatory (OOT). He asked us about the other four or five IBAs within an hour’s drive from Tadoussac, and suggested that OOT could take responsibility as Caretaker for all of them (or find the appropriate person). Neither of us had thought about this, but it made perfect sense given the distribution pattern of IBAs and people.

In fact, at the time of publication of this article, Nature Québec has confirmed 6 caretakers to monitor 13 IBAs. Compared with British Columbia, this pattern should not have come as a surprise, as after 2 full years in BC, 41 caretakers were responsible for 76 sites. No one considered the role of Caretaker a burden. In regard to updating site summaries, in two of the IBAs, the people we interviewed brought to our attention new information on birds that would either enhance the designation or provide a case for expanding the IBA boundaries.

The enthusiasm to volunteer as a Caretaker was punctuated shortly after leaving the Sept-Îles IBA. We were in transit between Sept-Îles and our next stop, Pointe-au-Père on the south shore. We decided at the last moment to take an hour before the ferry crossing to visit Pointe-des-Monts, a historical lighthouse. While this area is not yet an IBA, Pascal at OOT suggested it could be, as it is a very important migratory corridor. OOT had engaged two field ornithologists to document the magnitude and nature of the migration in the fall, partly to assess the site’s sensitivity to a potential wind energy development. We happened to see both of the ornithologists in the field as we drove through this remote area. We took a few moments to chat with one of them who told us that he had just observed a Northern Hawk Owl moments earlier. He informed us that he was from Sept-Îles and knew many of the people with whom we had met. When we described the Caretaker Network program to him, he enthusiastically volunteered on the spot to be a Caretaker for Sept-Îles. As we left in a great hurry to catch our ferry, we shook our heads at the overwhelming enthusiasm toward the Caretaker concept! We had not anticipated that it would be embraced so warmly.

___

16 See discussion in Appendix 2 under Sept-Îles.
17 See discussion of BC Caretaker network in Appendix 4.
4.5. The value of networking

Another subject that was broached with our interviewees was the value of belonging to the BirdLife IBA network. This was presented both in the sense of the network of Caretakers within Québec, Canada and globally through the IBA network, and also in the sense of the network of IBAs along migratory pathways or corridors that support a species through its breeding, wintering and migratory range. In all five IBAs, the prospect of networking with other Caretakers in Québec and Canada was viewed with enthusiasm. The prospect of sharing best practices and “not having to reinvent the wheel” were commonly cited as benefits of such a sharing network. The best tools for sharing were considered to be an internet portal (such as that being developed for Caretakers through the auspices of the Canadian Nature Network\textsuperscript{18}), Nature Québec’s e-newsletter, and potentially having periodic gatherings at which Caretakers could be brought together at either a regional or provincial scale.\textsuperscript{19} All of the people interviewed recognized that language would be a barrier for interactions with English only-speaking Caretakers and French only-speaking Caretakers in Québec.

There was equal enthusiasm toward recognizing and emphasizing the network of IBA sites supporting a bird species throughout its migration corridor. This value was seen as an important message to deliver to local stakeholders, decision makers and the public about the connectivity of sites and the value of their particular site within this larger context. There was also

\textsuperscript{18} www.canadiannaturenetwork.ca
\textsuperscript{19} As noted earlier, Nature Québec is doing this under the auspices of their annual workshop on conservation of natural environments in spring 2010. BC Nature has expressed a great interest in doing something similar for the BC IBA Caretakers but to present has been unsuccessful in securing funding.
considerable interest in the possibility of interacting with people involved in IBAs elsewhere in the Americas for the same IBA species. The idea of “twinning” IBAs, and creating platforms for exchanges of knowledge, information and perhaps resources was highly regarded.

### Linking along flyways

The idea of twinning sites or organizations is not new in Canada with regard to birds. For example, at least four of the 25 bird observatories that belong to the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network have some sort of a supporting relationship with groups in Latin America founded on bird species that they share in common. Most of the observatories are also in or adjacent to IBAs, making the “flyway” concept all the more tangible.

On average, 90% of Canadian birds leave Canada each fall to winter further south throughout the Americas. Some areas in Central America or the Caribbean, for example, are of extreme importance for these birds of Canadian origin. With this in mind, some bird observatories have sought to establish relationships with sister organizations in Latin America, which encounter some of the same species. The goal is often to support these sister groups in their efforts to undertake monitoring or conservation work.

One example is the Bruce Peninsula Bird Observatory [www.bpbo.ca](http://www.bpbo.ca), (BPBO) located in central Ontario, which has supported MOSI bird monitoring stations (MOSI stands for Monitoreo de la sobrevivencia invernal-Monitoring of Wintering Survivorship) in Nicaragua by providing a small annual donation in support of the program, raising awareness in Ontario about Nicaragua and the conservation challenges and opportunities there, leading a group of BPBO members on a trip to visit to a few Nicaraguan monitoring stations and meet key people involved, and currently sponsoring a young Nicaraguan field ornithologist on an internship at the BPBO field station at Cabot Head in Ontario.

### 4.6. Common challenges facing Caretakers

Throughout the course of interviews and discussion with Anne-Marie, some recurring themes arose as challenges to both the individual Caretaker and the effectiveness of the Network. The most common ones are listed below with additional comments on ideas to overcome the challenges.

- **Lack of awareness of the IBA**

  At all of the IBAs, interview participants alluded to the lack of profile of the IBA. This was clearly an obstacle to advocating on behalf of the IBA or its birds, particularly in the context of resource management and land- and water-use decisions. This problem is recognized at the national level as a shortcoming that requires urgent attention, including clear messaging about what an IBA is and the importance of the individual site for birds and biodiversity. A national communications subcommittee of the IBA Canada committee is addressing this issue among others, which will lead to outreach resources that will be available to regional partners and local IBAs in French and English. A second strategy that will be part of increasing the IBAs’ profiles will be the expectation of the Caretaker to conduct at least one outreach activity annually in the local community. Most of the people interviewed emphasized how important and valuable outreach efforts are, whether through information panels or guided outings. Finally, the provincial and national partners will be ramping up efforts to inform and if possible engage federal and provincial agencies responsible for national resource management in IBA conservation.
- **Low priority for the IBA relative to other issues**
  In most of the IBAs situated in settled areas, IBAs are also transportation corridors, recreational areas, and places where people live, work and play. Relative to these other functions, managing an area “for the birds” tends to slip to the bottom of considerations. Local advocacy at the municipal planning level, backed up by the previously described efforts to engage federal and provincial agencies in IBA conservation, is required. Whether this is the role of the Caretaker, or others involved in some way in the IBA, will vary between IBAs. In Québec, along the Saint Lawrence, a key strategy to addressing this challenge is through involvement of the region ZIP (ZIP = Zone d’Intervention Prioritaire) in the IBA conservation work, perhaps even as the Caretaker. The ZIP managers must, by their very nature, interact with the key actors in resource-related issues within and beyond the IBA. Having the ZIP managers as IBA advocates is a good strategy to raising the IBA profile in this regional context.

- **Inefficiency of conservation efforts**
  As one of the participants told us in our interview, we often deal with the same problems, but since we are so busy and do not talk with each other, we do not learn from each others’ experiences and spend considerable time “reinventing the wheel.” To this challenge, the national and provincial partners need to facilitate sharing between Caretakers. Free and open communication among network participants can be a defining mark of a successful network. At this point, the network becomes more than the sum of its parts. Efforts by Nature Québec to bring together Caretakers at their annual Workshop on Conservation of Natural Areas, and the development of a communications portal for Caretakers by the national partners could and should be the types of activities and tools that will facilitate exchanges and sharing, lead to more efficiencies, and less reinventing of the wheel.

- **Lack of long-term funding**
  Most of our local partners suffer from the same challenges as all organizations- a dependency on short-term funding. As such, effort is spent chasing money and sometimes delivering activities that are only tangentially related to the larger goal. One way of addressing this issue is though securing sustainable and long-term funding, the dream of all non-governmental groups. One key to this is having a credible program that can prove to funders that it is worth investing in. Making this case is the responsibility of the national and provincial partners. A diversified approach to fundraising is also important. The early years of the IBA program, which relied on one large federal government grant for operations, was a lesson to the IBA Canada partners of the need to diversify the funding base for the program. A second approach is that of BC Nature, which has intentionally kept their version of the IBA program modest and volunteer driven, as is largely the case with the operations of BC Nature. In this way, the program (and organization) is less dependent upon external funders.

- **Language**
  A final challenge in Québec is language and culture. As stated elsewhere, approximately 90% of the population of Québec is francophone, and a considerable percentage of the 90% do not speak English. The language is only part of what really is a very distinctive culture within the Canadian confederation. This adds a challenge to integrating and harmonizing the Québec version of an IBA Program and an IBA Caretaker Network with the National IBA Program and the Canadian IBA Caretaker Network. At the level of relationship between the National IBA Canada partners, Nature Canada and Bird Studies Canada, and the Québec partner, Nature Québec, the only way that this obstacle can be overcome is through good and open communications. On an operational level this means some bilingual staff in all...
three organizations where there is program overlap, and from the national perspective the development of national level tools, including the national website, the Caretaker portal, and national-level outreach materials such as brochures and posters in both English and French. Clearly, Québec Caretakers can learn from experiences elsewhere in Canada and vice versa. Providing the tools and opportunities for this type of sharing will strengthen the program and also the culture.

5. Conclusions

This exploration of the emerging IBA Caretaker Network in Québec has added to our understanding of the value of the IBA Caretaker concept and the challenges and opportunities within Québec and Canada to develop an effective network of IBA Caretakers. Six threads that link participants and organizations in the Network together have been identified:

- The coordinating role of Nature Québec, the regional IBA leader was reinforced
- The existence of conservation plans or other designations was important to orient activities
- The passion and skills of people involved in IBAs was clear
- Interest in being a Caretaker was strong
- Networking with other caretakers was highly valued
- Common challenges and solutions were identified during interviews.

Analysis of these common threads has lead to some valuable observations to inform both the national and provincial partners on the continued development of the IBA Caretaker Network in Canada.

We have learned that the Caretakers concept is a strong selling point in itself. We now know that participants in local IBAs place considerable value on being part of a network from the perspective of both being able to share and learn from others in the network, but also from promoting their own IBA as part of something much larger, and perhaps linking to other IBAs and groups with whom they share the birds. We have learned that Caretakers need not be birders, but people with a strong connection to the IBA, either through work or a personal passion, or both in many cases. Often the need to raise local awareness of the IBA was identified as a key priority. This exploration has also shown us that conservation planning exercises in Québec have born fruit, which has maintained the interest and engagement of local people long after the plans were completed. Finally, this investigation has confirmed the important roles that the national partners and provincial partner, Nature Québec in the case of Québec, have and must play in maintaining the IBA Program, growing the IBA Caretaker Network, and providing Caretakers with tools for effective work, including tools to permit sharing and avoid reinventing the wheel.

We have also learned from the BC experience that ‘modest’ expectations of a Caretaker are an important element in making the role of caretaker attractive.\textsuperscript{20} When we described the role and responsibilities of prospective IBA Caretakers to the people we met with in Québec, it was very clear that the simple and straight-forward expectations were a strong selling point for enlisting

\textsuperscript{20} Anne Murray, BC Nature, personal communication.
them as prospective IBA Caretakers. People like the area, visit it or live by it anyway, so a few simple tasks to ensure the sites are being monitored or “cared for” does not seem to be too much to ask.

Visiting several IBAs in Québec at this critical turning point was a great benefit. In reality, the great complexities of our world and its competing values will always make it challenging to place one value above the others. However, one of the great values of being part of a network of common interest, such as the BirdLife Network, the IBA Caretaker Network, or the network of IBAs along a bird’s migratory corridor, is knowing that there are others who share common values and interests. We are a social animal after all, and it is through our interactions with others that we find meaning. In a small way, we expect that the IBA Caretaker Network in Québec will both help with conservation but also provide meaning for the work and activities of the Caretakers themselves. We also hope that through integration of the Québec Caretakers into the national program, we can provide a small bridge between French and English Canada.
Appendix 1

Questions posed to potential Caretakers in Quebec IBAs, October 2009

1. Quelles sont vos attentes pour cette rencontre ? What are your expectations for this interview?

2. Qu’est ce qui vous motive dans votre travail en relation avec les ZICO ? What motivates you in your work relative to the IBA?

3. Quels bénéfices voyez-vous à faire partie d’un réseau de Gardiens des ZICO et du programme international de BirdLife ? What benefits do you see in participating in the IBA Caretaker Network and BirdLife International’s IBA program?

4. Est-ce que ça vous intéresse de participer à un programme international qui vise à protéger et à suivre les espèces dans toute leur aire de distribution ? What interests you in participating in an international program that aims to protect species throughout their flyways and ranges?

5. Que pensez-vous des ZICO dans le concept des corridors de migration? How do IBAs fit into the concept of migratory corridors for you?

6. Étant un gardien d’un ZICO êtes-vous prêts à réviser les fiches descriptives des ZICO et à effectuer une visite au moins une fois par année sur un site ? Being an IBA Caretaker, are you willing to revise the site summary and conduct at least one visit annually?

7. Estimez-vous avoir les compétences pour effectuer un suivi de l’état des sites? Do you feel that you have the skills to take on the role as IBA Caretaker and monitor the state of the habitat?

8. Estimez-vous avoir les compétences pour effectuer un suivi au niveau des populations d’oiseaux vedettes? Do you have the skills to monitor the populations of the key IBA species within the site?

9. Aimeriez-vous pouvoir communiquer avec d’autres gardiens et pour quelle fin? Would you like to communicate with other Caretakers? If so for what purpose?

10. Quel serait, selon vous, le meilleur moyen de communication entre les Gardiens? In your opinion what would be the best ways to communicate with other Caretakers?

11. Que pensez-vous de l’utilisation d’outils de communication Internet pour communiquer avec d’autres gardiens (ex. : Portail RCN, Facebook)? How do you feel about using internet-based tools to communicate with other Caretakers (e.g. Canadian Nature Network portal, Facebook)?
Appendix 2

Interview with Anne-Marie Turgeon, Nature Québec, on the Provincial Program

To understand better the nature of the IBA program in Québec from the perspective of Nature Québec, I interviewed Anne-Marie Turgeon, biologist responsible for overseeing the IBA program with Nature Québec. The questions and answers were in French, and are translated into English. In Québec, Important Bird Areas are called « ZICOs, » or Zones Importantes pour la Conservation des Oiseaux. In Québec, the IBA Caretakers are referred to as “les Gardiens des ZICO”.

Purpose of the national network (from Partner point of view)

- Quels sont les bénéfices de participer à ce réseau? C’est très bénéfique de participer à un réseau international car ça donne de la valeur à ce qu’on fait. On peut aussi partager localement des expériences qui sont arrivées ailleurs dans le monde, au Canada ou au Québec. C’est très motivant pour les groupes locaux et les gardiens de savoir qu’ils ne sont pas seuls dans leurs actions.

(trans. What are the benefits for being part of the IBA network? It is very beneficial to participate in this international network because it provides value to what we do. We can also share the experiences that we have gained from elsewhere in Canada and the world with local groups and people in Québec. This is very inspiring for local groups and caretakers to know that they are not alone in their actions.)

- Quels sont les potentiels points de conflit entre Nature Québec et les partenaires nationaux et aussi entre Nature Québec et les gardiens? Les activités de sensibilisation ou de conservation réalisées (ex. : panneau d’interprétation) doivent respecter des critères et normes internationales, nationales et provinciales, ce qui peut représenter un long processus de validation pour les groupes locaux et les gardiens. Le besoin de se conformer à ce qui est décidé au niveau international, national ou provincial peut représenter un obstacle pour les groupes locaux.

(trans. What are the potential points of conflict between Nature Québec and the national partners and also between Nature Québec and the Caretakers? The outreach and conservation activities (e.g. interpretation panels) must respect international, national and provincial criteria and standards, which can result in a long process for approval for local groups and Caretakers. The need to conform to these standards can present obstacles for local groups.)

- Comment faire face aux obstacles et les surmonter? Le réseautage entre les groupes locaux, les gardiens et Nature Québec doit être mis en œuvre efficacement pour bien diffuser les messages associés aux ZICO. Tous les niveaux de décision (international, national ou provincial) doivent être sur la même longueur d’onde au sujet de ce qui est transmit aux groupes locaux.

(trans. How can the obstacles be overcome? The networking between local groups, the Caretakers and Nature Québec must be effectively managed to clearly communicate the messages associated with the IBA. All levels of decision (international, national or...
Communications

- **Comment fonction le système de communication entre les gardiens et entre Nature Québec et les gardiens?** Il n’y a pas encore officiellement de contacts entre les gardiens mais une première rencontre (sous forme d’un déjeuner de discussions et d’échange d’expertise) sera réalisée dans le cadre des Ateliers sur la conservation des milieux naturels en mars 2010. Pour le contact entre les gardiens et Nature Québec, des rencontres initiales en personne sont effectuées et ensuite un suivi est réalisé par courriel ou par téléphone avec les gardiens selon les besoins de chacun. De plus, des informations et outils sont rendus disponibles pour les gardiens sur le site internet ZICO. Un bulletin électronique ZICO a été lancé en 2009 et diffusé à tous les partenaires des ZICO à travers le Québec. Il sera diffusé 3 fois par année. Il permet d’informer les partenaires sur les actualités ZICO, les actions locales, le programme de gardiens, les événements à venir, etc. C’est un très bon outil de réseautage pour les groupes locaux, les gardiens et aussi pour les bailleurs de fonds qui financent des actions de conservation et de sensibilisation dans les ZICO.

(trans. How do communications work between Caretakers (and other Caretakers), and between Nature Québec and Caretakers? There is not yet official contact between Caretakers, but an initial meeting (in the form of a breakfast meeting and forum for discussion and exchange of expertise) will take place in the context of Nature Québec’s Workshop on Conservation of Natural Areas in March 2010. For contact between Caretakers and Nature Québec, initial meetings in person are the most effective. These are followed by email or phone communications depending upon the needs of each one. Moreover, information and tools are made available for the Caretakers on Nature Québec’s ZICO website. An electronic newsletter on ZICO was initiated in 2009 and distributed to all partners of ZICO across Québec. It will be published three times per year permitting Nature Québec to keep partners well informed of current news, local actions, the Caretakers Program, future events, etc. It is a very valuable program for networking for local groups, the Caretakers and also for funders who finance the conservation and awareness building actions in the ZICO.

Coordination and management

- **Comment est le réseau coordonné?** La coordination du réseau au Québec est assurée par Nature Québec depuis 2000. Depuis quelques années, la coordination est soutenue de manière plus régulièrre par des partenaires financiers désireux de s’investir dans ce programme. Plusieurs personnes à Nature Québec sont impliquées à différents niveaux (direction, chargée de projet et stagiaires) dans la coordination de ce programme.

(trans. how is the network coordinated? The coordination of the network in Québec is done by Nature Québec since 2000. Since the last few years, the coordination is maintained more regularly thanks to funding partners interested in investing in the program. Many people at Nature Québec have been involved in different levels (management, project leaders and interns) in the coordination of the ZICO program.)

Relationships and linkages

- **Comment fonctionnent les relations entre le réseau et le gouvernement?** Les gouvernements reconnaissent de plus en plus l’importance du programme ZICO et le
considèrent davantage dans leurs actions et leur financement. Des partenariats existent pour de l’échange d’informations. De plus, certains ministères (provinciaux et nationaux) sont présents sur le comité consultatif ZICO et participent ainsi à l’orientation du programme et des actions locales au Québec.

(trans. What is the relationship between the IBA network and the government? The governments recognize more and more the importance of the IBA program and consider it increasingly in their actions and funding programs. Partnerships exist for the exchange of information. Moreover, some ministries (provincial and national) are present and participate in the advisory committee as well as contributing to the program’s orientation and local actions in Québec.)

- **Quels type de relations existent entre le réseau et autres ONGs?** Généralement, de bonnes relations existent avec les autres ONG impliquées dans les ZICO, comme par exemple des partenariats d’échanges d’informations de toutes sortes. Les autres ONG reconnaissent de plus en plus le programme ZICO et le considèrent dans leurs actions.

(trans. What type of relationships exist between the IBA network in Québec and other ENGOs? Generally, there are good relations with other NGOs in the IBAs, where, for example, the partners readily share information of many types. The other NGOs increasingly recognize the IBA program and consider IBAs in their actions.)

- **Les gardiens réussissent-ils à influencer les décisions qui touchent la gestion et la pérennité des ZICO?** Les gardiens n’ont pas vraiment d’influence directe sur les décisions concernant le programme ZICO mais ils assurent la pérennité du programme ZICO en s’impliquant directement sur le terrain et en orientant les actions locales de conservation et de sensibilisation dans les ZICO.

(trans. Are the Caretakers successful in influencing decisions that influence the management of the IBA? Caretakers do not directly influence decisions concerning the ZICO program but they assure the longevity of the program by being involved directly on the ground and in orienting local actions in stewardship, conservation and awareness in the ZICO.)

**Main achievements of the network**

- **Quel est un succès du réseau jusqu’au présent?** Une des réussites du programme ZICO au Québec est d’avoir des gens actifs qui réalisent des actions localement dans les ZICO à la grandeur du Québec.

(trans. What is one success for the IBA network up to now? One of the successes of the IBA program in Québec is to have people actively involved who achieve local actions in the IBAs all over Québec.)

**Network strengths and weaknesses**

- **Est-ce que le réseau est durable?** Oui, il est de plus en plus durable et reconnu.

(trans. Is the network sustainable? Yes, it is more and more sustainable and recognized.)

- **Quels sont les plus grandes difficultés et défis rencontrés jusqu’au présent?** Au Québec, l’étendue du territoire est une grande difficulté car elle occasionne des coûts de déplacement parfois très élevés pour les rencontres avec les gardiens et les groupes actifs. Cette situation limite ainsi les déplacements et le nombre de rencontres réalisées.

---

21 Environmental non-governmental organizations
en personne entre Nature Québec et les intervenants locaux. De plus, elle limite aussi la réalisation d’ateliers ou de colloques provinciaux regroupant tous les acteurs des ZICO à travers le Québec.

(trans. What are the largest difficulties and challenges encountered up to now? In Québec, the province is enormously vast which presents challenges because the cost of travel is usually very high to meet with Caretakers or local groups or visit a site. This situation limits the amount of travel and the number of meetings that can be held between Nature Québec and local groups or Caretakers. Moreover, the distance limits the ability to hold workshops or provincial congresses as the cost of bringing together all of the IBA program participants in Québec is exorbitant.)

- **Comment Nature Québec va fortifier et maintenir le réseau?** Continuer à diffuser le bulletin électronique ZICO et faire participer les gardiens et les groupes locaux à la rédaction d’articles sur ce qu’ils font dans leur ZICO. Organiser des rencontres ou ateliers régionaux pour faciliter le réseautage entre les gens. Nature Québec va continuer à offrir un soutien aux gardiens et groupes actifs et à leur fournir des outils pour faciliter les actions de conservation et de sensibilisation dans les ZICO.

(trans. How does Nature Québec plan on maintaining and strengthening the network? Nature Québec will do this through its electronic newsletter and involve Caretakers and local groups in contributing articles about what they do in their IBA. Nature Québec will also organize regional workshops to facilitate networking and the sharing of information. Nature Québec is going to continue to offer support to Caretakers and groups active by providing them with tools to facilitate their conservation actions and awareness building within their IBA.)

**Constraints**

- **Quels sont les facteurs ou obstacles qui limitent ou empêchent les gardiens de réaliser leurs objectifs (et les efforts de réseautage?)** Le manque d’argent et le manque de temps sont des limitations importantes pour la réalisation d’actions de conservation et de sensibilisation.

(trans. What are the factors or obstacles that limit or prevent the Caretakers from reaching their objectives or and ability to network? The distance between people, isolation, the lack of funds, and the lack of time limit the achievement of conservation and awareness activities and the networking opportunities.)

- **Pourquoi le choix de ZICO et non IBA?** Le nom ZICO (Zones Importantes pour la Conservation des Oiseaux) est une traduction francophone presque textuelle du terme anglophone IBA (Importante Bird Areas). Au Canada, les deux langues officielles sont le français et l’anglais, et au Québec, la langue officielle est le français. C’est pourquoi on utilise le terme francophone ZICO au Québec au lieu d’IBA.

(trans. Why the choice of the name ZICO and not IBA. The name ZICO (Zones Importantes pour la Conservation des Oiseaux) is a literal French translation of the English term Important Bird Areas) (IBA). In Canada, the two official languages are French and English, and in Québec, the official language is French. This is why we use the French term ZICO in Québec instead of IBA.)
Case Studies of Five IBAs in Québec

Case Study 1. Tadoussac

This site is located east of the Saguenay River, four kilometres northeast of Tadoussac, Québec. It extends from Pointe aux Vaches to Baie du Moulin à Baude, on the north coast of the St. Lawrence River. It is located by an old delta of the Saguenay River and includes sandy tidal flats extending down from this delta. The habitat is largely open with many clumps of small shrubs, and forested areas of conifers, White Birch and aspen. These forested areas are mainly located on hilly terrain immediately around the site.

Tadoussac IBA is recognized for the large number and diversity of hawks seen during fall migration. The St. Lawrence River here is oriented in a southwest-northeast direction so southbound migrants that have arrived at the shore follow the coast rather than crossing the river, creating a bottleneck effect for raptors and many landbirds. Raptor movements have been monitored since 1992 by the Observatoire d’Oiseaux de Tadoussac (OOT) (Tadoussac Bird Observatory). An average of 16,430 hawks (1993-1999) have been tallied, with a high of 24,690 birds in 1999, and a low of 7,009 in 1996.
Pascal Côté works full time for OOT. I was able to meet him prior to our interview in the context of the biannual congress of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. Pascal was the host, and me, being the first arrival, had all of his attention before the throngs arrived in the midst of the first serious snow storm of the year. Four days, later, after a superb congress, we sat in a classroom, with my colleague from Nature Québec, Anne-Marie Turgeon to discuss the Tadoussac IBA, his interest in being a Caretaker, and the potential role of the bird observatory.

Interested in birds since childhood, Pascal is clearly inspired by the migration of birds. He describes the migration at Tadoussac as “incroyable!” and feels fortunate to be living and working in such a remarkable location. I had a chance to observe the migration during a brief field trip to the bird observatory’s monitoring station perched high above the St. Lawrence. Hundreds of American Robins (Turdus migratorius), and Bohemian waxwings (Bombycilla garrulus) feasted on abundant Mountain Ash berries. Pascal subscribes to the belief that birds are indicators of the state of the environment. This is a strong motivator for him – working with birds for the betterment of the environment. “J’aime croire qu’on contribue à mieux connaître les espèces et leurs besoins.” (trans: I like to believe that this work helps better understand the birds and their needs)

The OOT is a program of Explos-Nature, a charitable organization based out of Les Bergeronnes. Explos-Nature is a centre for scientific research and environmental education at the mouth of the Saguenay River and the surrounding area of Charlevoix, a mountainous and spectacular part of “la Côte-Nord,” the rugged north shore of the St. Lawrence. Explos-Nature is the 2nd largest employer in the area, and thus has gained the respect and support of the local community and leaders alike. Explos-Nature’s Board of Directors includes several academics and some alumni who developed a passion for the coast while participating in programs at Explos-Nature. The bird observatory depends on raising funds to operate its migration monitoring program at Tadoussac, and conducts ornithological studies along la Côte-Nord of Québec. Pascal is an enthusiastic ornithologist and manager of the observatory. He is one of the younger people involved in OOT – which is also predominantly male – a characteristic of the Québec birding community in general. OOT conducts fall diurnal migration monitoring from posts overlooking the mouth of the Saguenay River, intercepting birds, mainly raptors, migrating south and west in the fall along the north shore axis of the St. Lawrence River. The observatory also conducts banding of passerines and owls, and does public outreach on species of concern such as the Barn Swallow (Hirundo rustica) one of several declining aerial insectivores that breed in North-
eastern North America. Pascal noted that banding at Tadoussac “n’apporte pas beaucoup de choses au point de vue scientifique, mais au niveau de l’éducation çà apporte beaucoup. » (trans – banding has limited scientific value at the OOT, but is has high educational value)

In discussing the IBA with Pascal, he pointed out that there are other IBAs in the area. In fact, by the end of the interview, Pascal generously offered to be a Caretaker, or find Caretakers for five other IBAs in the vicinity. While this was an unforeseen and very welcome outcome of the meeting, it also makes sense when a bird observatory is proximate to several IBAs in a sparsely populated area like Tadoussac.

We asked Pascal about the value of the IBA, compared a national park. Two National Parks are in the area, le Parc National du Saguenay, part of the Québec National park system, and the Saguenay- St. Lawrence Marine Park, part of the Canadian federal governments marine conservation area system. “ZICO ce n’est pas contraignant comme un parc – c’est peut-être une approche plus ouverte.» (trans IBAs are not restrictive like a park – perhaps they are a more open approach (and easier to get buy-in from local people who sometimes feel threatened by a park overly restricting their activities). Much of the land where OOT operates its migration monitoring station is owned privately by the Molson family who want to keep the area in its natural state, and who do lots of good work for conservation. The local business association has approached OOT to develop tourism tools related to birds. There is a significant tourism industry linked to whale watching, however, a portion of that population is interested in birds, which are observed more regularly than whales on the excursions.

Pascal recognizes the need to work collaboratively and through networks, particularly in the context of IBAs. Le problème est qu’on travail en silo » C’est important de travailler plus au niveau régional. Par exemple, prenez le Bécasseau Maubèche (Calidris canutus). –qui suit un corridor de migration de l’Arctique jusqu’en Patagonie, qui touche la Côte-Nord, le cote Atlantique, et l’Amérique du sud ou il y a plusieurs haltes migratoires. Ce n’est pas en protégeant seulement une halte qu’on va protéger l’espèce. » (trans – The problem is that we work in silos. We should work more regionally. Take the Red Knot (Calidris canutus) for example. It migrates between the Arctic and Patagonia with stops along the Saint Lawrence, the Atlantic and South America along the way. Protecting only one of its stop-overs is clearly insufficient for protecting the species
Case Study 2. Sept-Îles

Sept-Îles is a small city of about 30,000 habitats, in eastern Québec on the rugged north shore of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The city sits on a large bay, protected from the gulf by a peninsula to the west (Point Noire), and the seven islands for which it is named. Two large aluminium smelters, and other mining-related industrial operations figure prominently in the City’s economy, and also in the visual landscape. The Port itself is one of the most important in Canada from the point of view of tonnage shipped, occasionally bettering even Vancouver. The City is also a major regional centre for government services and health care.

The bay and archipelago of Sept-Îles supports an exceptional concentration of sea birds. The IBA is globally significant because of the concentration of Razorbills *Alca torda*, Greater Black-backed Gull *Larus marinus* and Herring Gull *Larus argentus*. The IBA also supports continentally significant concentrations of Double-crested Cormorants *Phalacrocorax auritus* and Black-legged Kitiwake *Rissa tridactyla*. Every year, tens of thousands of seabirds belonging to a variety of species choose the bay as a migration stop-over including Long-tailed Duck, *Changula hyemalis*, Black Guillemot, *Cepphus grylle*, Common Murre, *Uria aalge*, Surf Scoter *Melanitta perpicillata*, Black Scoter *Merlanitta nigra*, and American Black Duck *Anas rubripes*. Each spring, hundreds of American Black Ducks breed in wetlands adjacent to the bay.
The site also regularly supports good numbers of several federal species at risk including Peregrine Falcon, *Falco Peregrinus*, Yellow Rail, *Coturnicops noveboracensis*, Short-eared Owl, *Asio flammeus*, Barrow’s Goldeneye, *Bucephala islandica*, and Nelson’s Short-tailed Sparrow, *Ammodramus nelsoni*, all of which use the IBA regularly. The vast tidal flats also support a very large variety and abundance of shorebirds.

The meeting was organized for early in the morning of October 27 in the City Hall of Sept-Îles. We arrived to find the Board room full of people, all representing different organizations with an interest in the IBA from the perspective of conservation. Stéphanie Prévost, (Corporation de protection de l’environnement de Sept-Îles) (CPESI) representing the municipality, or the “Corpo” as is it is called locally (corporation), chaired the meeting.

After introductions and brief presentations about the IBA program in Canada and Québec by Anne-Marie and myself, each person explained their interest in the IBA and their reasons for involvement. In 2007, a conservation plan was completed for the IBA [http://www.natureQuébec.org/zico/plans/PlanQC081.pdf](http://www.natureQuébec.org/zico/plans/PlanQC081.pdf) by Nature Québec. In the plan, the conservation objectives, actions, timing and responsibilities for implementation were identified. Some of the organizations around the table are actively involved in conservation-related work which serves directly or indirectly to implement actions and attain the plan’s objectives. For example, Virginie Provost, of the Comité ZIP Côte- Nord du Golfe – (ZIP = Zone d’Intervention Prioritaire) is actively involved in several initiatives. One involves identifying and monitoring the large zone of Zostère, the aquatic plant that forms critically important habitat for a huge range of marine life from tiny crustaceans to large fish and birds. Sophie Roy, Pêches et Océans Canada, is overseeing aquatic inventories of these reed-beds on which 15 species are dependent. Two of the federal avian species at risk that are supported by this habitat, are the Harlequin Duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*) and the Barrow’s Goldeneye.

Another project that some of the participants around the table collaborate on involves restoration of salt marsh. Stéphane Guérin, of the Ministère des ressources naturelles et de la faune, noted that Sept-Îles contains 200 of the 1300 hectares of salt marsh on the entire 1300 kilometres of Côte Nord of the Saint Lawrence. The salt marsh supports many of the IBA species. Part of his job is aimed at securing the protection of this habitat through partnerships with groups like Ducks Unlimited, and through public outreach.

The ZIP is also involved in what is called “mise en valeur.” This pertains to “improvements” that are done to allow the public to benefit and learn from the area without damaging it. One example of a project that seemed excellent in theory but has had an unexpected negative impact is an observation tour constructed in the salt marshes. “Le problème avec la tour – autour il n’y a rien – et juste le fait d’aller marcher vers le tour les oiseaux qui te voient s’en volent. » (trans – the problem with the observation tour is that the birds see you approaching it and when they see you, they fly away.) This observation led to a good discussion around design considerations of observation towers and blinds (to hide the observers as hunters do), in which a collaborative approach to design (that could involve both tourism, conservationists and biologists) would be able to flag and address issues such as disturbance of habitat. The ZIP is also hoping to produce a bird guide for the ZICO of Sept-Îles and conduct other types of outreach to educate those living near to, or using the IBA, of its importance and value.
France Routhier, of Tourisme Sept-Îles is involved in aspects of promoting tourism opportunities that raise awareness of the IBA including the production of a tourist guidebook on bird watching sites around the bay. Tourisme Sept-Îles is also involved along with some of the other organizations in the promotion of a Regional Park, that could include much of the Bay. She explained that the birds in the IBA already are a tourist attraction. For example, a visit to the bird colonies on l’île du Corossol, a federal Migratory Bird Sanctuary with large populations of seabirds, is part of the tourist boat tours leaving from the port. Many of those around the table agreed that a few strategically placed interpretive panels about the IBA would add much to raising awareness of the IBA and its ecological values.

As we discussed the role of the IBA Caretaker, it became obvious that for this massive IBA that covered over 80 square kilometres could use several “sub-Caretakers.” France noted how the family of the past lighthouse keepers had a keen interest in birds and had a good relationship with the Canadian Wildlife Service, suggesting that they would be the ideal Caretakers for the island bird colony part of the IBA. “La famille de l’ancien gardien du phare a un chalet là qui a le droit d’être là. Ces gens là pourraient remplir les fiches – il vont là-bas souvent. Depuis 20, 30 ans ils connaissent bien les oiseaux. » (trans. The family of the last lighthouse keepers have a cottage on the island and have the right to be there. Those folks could fill in the Caretaker forms – they spend much time there. For the last 20 to 30 years; they really know the birds well out there.)

Sébastien Caron, sits on the Conseil régional de l’environnement which is a full partner in the ZIP committee. He is working with others on the committee to persuade community leaders and decisions makers to create the regional park which would include the entire bay. One of the obstacles that he and others noted, but which he put most succinctly, was that « Sept-Îles est une ville dans un port, pas un port dans une ville. » (trans. Sept-Îles is a City in a port, not a port in a City.” The inference was that the Port authority, has less interest in local issues, and in the environment in general, because in their eyes, first and foremost, Sept-Îles is a port for shipping goods.

Mining and smelting of ore, particularly aluminum ore are the principal industrial activities. One of the companies, Aluminerie Alouette, has been particularly cooperative when it comes to environmental responsibility and has shown some positive initiative and leadership, and supported the bid for a Regional Park. Another group with potentially a strong role with the Caretaker initiative is the local birding club.

A significant part of the meeting was spent discussing whether the ZICO should form its own organization to oversee implementation of the conservation plan. In the end, it seemed clear that everyone’s plate was sufficiently full and that a new organization was not the answer. While Stéphanie Prévost, considers the « Corpo » as the natural leader in the IBA « porteur de ballon pour la ZICO, » (Literal trans.- the one who carries the ball) from the perspective of the Municipality, the IBA is a low priority compared to the economy. For this reason she believes there is still work to do to persuade municipal leaders about the significance of the environment and the need to consider it more prominently in their decisions. “Ca ne va pas aller très loin si c’est pas respecté par la machine de la ville. » (trans – It won’t go very far if it is not a priority for the City).
When the meeting ended after three hours, there seemed to be a clear determination to build on the momentum of the meeting and address the conservation plan priorities in a coordinated manner, while establishing the Caretaker role, also in a coordinator manner with new partners.

We did get to the question about what motivates each of them. Here are some of the responses:

- **Les richesses locales nous motivent** (trans. The rich natural resources motivate us)
- **l’aspect international est fort intéressant (1 pour cent)** (trans. The international aspect of IBAs is extremely interesting – that the area supports 1% of a global population)
- **Les gens qui sont impliqués se motivent** (trans. The people who are involved in this motivate each other)
- **Biodiversité – mine d’or.** (the biodiversity here is a gold mine)
- **Aspect de la mer – joue un rôle – la mer fait un rapport international.** (trans. It’s the sea; the sea plays a role – it creates an international context – it connects us to others)

**Case Study 3. Pointe-au-Père**

Pointe-au-Père is a regional park and light house situated just to the east of Rimouski, located on the North coast of the Gaspé peninsula, and on the south side of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. The park is a tourism destination that includes la “musée de la mer” a museum on the ocean.
with its “piece de resistance” – a submarine, intentionally grounded – at the very point. Adjacent to the Museum is the Pointe-au-Père National Wildlife Area (NWA). The NWA boundary is essentially the same as the IBA. The Marais de Point-au-Père IBA is a significant stopover site for waterfowl and shorebirds, in both spring and fall. Greater Snow Goose (*Chen caerulescens*) is the dominant waterfowl species in spring, with globally significant numbers of 25,000 (almost 4% of the North American Greater Snow Goose population) passing through the site. Barrow’s Goldeneye is also present in spring, with as many as 150 birds recorded at one time; this number represents 5% of the eastern continental population. The coastal marsh habitat here is one of six locations in the mid and lower St. Lawrence estuary that are considered exceptional for the Common Eider (*Somateria mollissima*). The site is especially important for feeding and brood rearing. Groups of over 1,000 are regularly present during the post-breeding dispersal period but a count of 2,600 in August 1991 was continentally significant.

During spring migration, Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*), Least Sandpiper (*Calidris minutilla*), and Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*) use the site in globally significant numbers. In 1972, 1,000 Least Sandpipers were counted (just over 1% of the global population). In 1983 and 1985, over 1% of the global populations of Greater Yellowlegs (250 birds) and Short-billed Dowitcher (1,365 birds) respectively, were recorded. In fall migration, an additional four shorebird species use the site in globally significant numbers. In 1986, 1,600 Ruddy Turnstones (*Arenaria interpres*) (4% of the global population), 2,000 White-rumped Sandpipers (*Calidris fuscicollis*) (4% of the global population) and 3,000 Dunlin (*Calidris alpine spp. hudsonia*) (3% of the global population) were recorded. Finally, more than 1,000 Black-bellied Plovers (*Pluvialis squatarola*) have been recorded, which is a globally significant concentration. Many other shorebirds use the site, including the Semipalmated Sandpiper (*Calidris pusilla*) is the most common shorebird at this site; in 1985, 4,500 birds were counted.

Three species that are classified as nationally at risk occur at this site in small numbers during migration: Short-eared Owl (vulnerable), Peregrine Falcon (threatened) and the eastern population of Harlequin Duck (endangered).

We met Jean-Étienne Joubert, who is employed by the Comité ZIP du Sud-de-l’Estuaire, and Marilyn Labrecque, a local birder and biodiversity intern for Nature Québec, at the Pointe-au-Père lighthouse. Jean-Étienne is a multi-talented bird biologist whose background includes visual arts and teaching. He brought with him many documents and materials, which we were able to peruse in the Musée de la Mer. The key document was a 200 plus page presentation of data and arguments for the expansion of the IBA to the west to include all of the tidal flats and Zostères beds in Rimouski Bay as well as the île Saint-Barnabé, an off-shore barrier island. In his own words, “ce n’est pas une caractérisation scientifique, c’est un portrait.” (trans. It is not a scientific description but rather a portrait of the proposed site.) The work reflected the 479 hours of field work (over one year) that he undertook to document bird activity in the proposed addition to the IBA. During that one year period he observed 188 of the 234 species ever observed in the Rimouski area.

Jean-Étienne is a passionate advocate for the IBA expansion. Through the context of the ZIP, he has put together strong science-based arguments for the expansion of the IBA, while gaining the support of key local officials and the public. As he puts it: « Si on ne réussit pas a rejoindre
suffisamment du monde avec la publicité, notre objective n’est pas atteint. » (trans. If we are unable to connect to the public adequately, our objectives are not realized).

Unfortunately his efforts to connect to the public over the course of the summer through guided outings on weekends had limited success with 2 to 7 participants attending on average. In 2010, the ZIP would like to install interpretive panels at different points in the IBA, and make a bigger effort to reach more people, perhaps through partnerships with the Musée de la mer, which received approximately 80,000 visits last year. The work of the ZIP includes serious collaborations with local stakeholders, otherwise the likelihood of conservation objectives being realized is very low. Thus far, Jean-Étienne has had good support from the Mayor’s office, tourism Rimouski, and the local birding club, of which one member sits on the Board of Directors of the ZIP. Jean-Étienne and is hoping that the Canadian Wildlife Service will be interested in supporting conservation related work at the site. The NWA includes an elaborate display which is clearly un-maintained, and has fallen into disrepair.

Jean-Étienne would clearly like the IBA to be better known, and better valued by the community. To be able to integrate the needs of the IBA into his own work with the Comité ZIP is a perfect fit. He also sees participation in the IBA network as a significant asset for the community:

« Ca m’intéresse beaucoup – de pouvoir dire ça au public – e n’est pas juste un site, ca fait parti d’un corridor. Ca sera excellent de pouvoir faire une carte qui démontre les oiseaux vedette qui correspondent à chaque ZICO, et où on pourrait cliquer sur un oiseau vedette pour allumer tous les autres ZICO qui soutiennent sa population, et pour voir où il va. Quand on comprendre un peux mieux le corridor – ca va permettre aux gens de communiquer entre eux dans les forum sur l’Internet. De pouvoir se réseauter comme ça, ça aide à ouvrir un peu plus la compréhension sur ce que c’est une migration et un déplacement. Et ca migrent toujours les oiseaux. » (trans. I am very interested in saying to the public “this is not just an important site for birds, but it is part of a corridor of sites.” It would be great if there was an IBA map that showed the key birds for each site, and on which you could click to see all the sites that support that bird and also see where it goes. When we understand a bit better this corridor, that will allow the people along the way to communicate in an internet forum, for example. To be able to network like this helps us understand what is a migration and what is a movement. Birds are always migrating!)
Les battures de Beauport are on the St. Lawrence River just east of Québec City. The site includes the île d’Orléans channel westward from L’Ange Gardien, and continues westward to include the Beauport tidal mudflats on the north side. In places, tidal flats can be as wide as 800 metres, with extensive *Scirpus* marshes. Immediately adjacent to the shorelines are highways, a railway and heavily urbanized areas. The waters are turbulent with strong currents and tides. Four species of fish that are in need of protection, such as American Eel and American Shad use the channel.

In spring and fall large numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds are attracted to the mudflats. Up to 105,876 waterfowl have been counted on spring surveys. Many of these birds were probably Greater Snow Geese since flocks of up to 100,000 Snow Geese have been recorded (2% of the North American population). In the fall of 1987, 4,000 American Black Ducks were tallied, representing over 1% of the global population. Before the construction of a highway in the late 1970s, this species was regularly present in even larger numbers - 5,000 to 8,000 were regularly seen. In the fall, many other species of waterfowl are present in the hundreds, sometimes thousands. During hunting season, ducks tend to concentrate in the middle of the channel and in hunting-free areas.

Thirty four species of shorebirds have been observed in the IBA, most in the Beauport flats. The most abundant species is the Semipalmated Sandpiper, which in fall migration was formerly
recorded in flocks of 5,000 to 10,000 birds (maximum of 40,000 in 1973). Since then however, Semipalmated Sandpiper numbers have declined, with 2,000 being the highest number counted here since 1990. Many other shorebird species number in the hundreds.

We met Jonathan Pedneau in a parking lot where there was an access point to the IBA. Jonathan works for the Groupe d’éducation et d’écosurveillance de l’eau (G3E), a local NGO involved in the conservation activities focused largely on the Beauport River that spills into the St. Lawrence in Beauport, on the eastern side of Québec City. Access to the IBA was not easy as a major highway separated the IBA from the City of Beauport. We had to walk through a tunnel beneath the expressway to approach the habitat. Jonathan describes this reality from two perspectives: “Une des problématiques est que l’accès au fleuve est coupé par l’autoroute. Mais, c’est triste à dire, mais ça fait une protection » (trans. One of the big problems is that access to the river is cut by the expressway. However, in an irony is that this also accords it a certain protection.)

He pointed out for us various projects that his groups and others have been involved in to enhance public access, make visitors aware of the significance of the site, and restore or protect habitat. As much of the IBA belongs to the Ministry of Transport (being within the port area), it is difficult accessing funds to do work at the site locally. He mentioned that while he and a few others know that the area is a ZICO, and realize the importance of the designation, most people, including decision makers, do not know about it, meaning there is considerable work to do educating the public. “ Il faut faire plus de publicité à propos des ZICO, parce que la population ne les connaît pas du tout. » (trans. The IBA needs more publicity and awareness building because the populations does not know about it).

Having information panels (a few about the ZICO are already in place) is one way of creating awareness. He suggested to us a “twist” on this idea that he was working on that involved installing a camera or cameras in nest boxes of birds within the IBA (such as wood ducks), and transmitting the images to an information panel within the IBA to attract the attention and interest of the public.

We could not help but notice the “multipurpose” nature of the site. There are large factories and a major port in the background, extensive tidal flats, wetland and beach in the foreground and along the river’s edge, and in the middle of the marsh, no more than a couple hundred metres from the major expressway, hunting blinds. I wondered about passing vehicles and gun shot. Jonathan said this is not really a problem, though it does mean that some areas are out-of-bounds for birders when the two or three hunters are active.

We drove five minutes from the parking lot to a wonderful café with gourmet hot chocolate, absolutely perfect for a cold late October day within sight of the oldest walled city in North America. The conversation continued. Jonathan told us that in addition to the industrial stressors of pollution, toxins, and noise, the area is a popular recreation destination for local residents. One of the popular activities that disturbs the birds is kite flying on the beach. This is the sort of issue that is difficult to manage, but certainly impacts some species, particularly resting shorebirds. This was one example where Jonathan perceived a value in participating as a Caretakers and being able to share both common problems and solutions with other Caretakers. We talked about a Caretakers internet portal as potentially a valuable tool through which this
sort of sharing could occur, even with English-speaking Caretakers, as long as there was some
cost of mechanism for overcoming the language barrier. Jonathan commented on this:

“Souvent, il y a beaucoup de matériel qui est développé à une autre place, bien souvent il y a plein
d’organismes qui travaillent a réinventer la roue. Déjà à Québec il y a la limitation de la langue.
On est un peu isolé si on n’est pas relié à quelque chose plus grand. Des organismes plus gros
chapeauteurs aident à travailler plus efficacement sur plusieurs domaines.” (trans. Often there
are lots of resources developed in another place, and very often there are many organizations that
work to reinvent the wheel. Already in Québec, there is the issue of language. We are a bit
isolated if we are not connected to something larger. Larger organizations (like Nature Québec
and Nature Canada) serve to unite us in the same tent and allow us to work more efficiently in
many areas.)

Funding projects is always a challenge to making real, long-lasting differences, Jonathan
explained because it is all short term:

« C’est difficile de faire des actions à long terme – toujours de projets de développement, de
création – mais rien pour soutenir à long terme. C’est dur d’avoir une vision à long terme
comme ça. Comme tel, c’est les habitats qui sont là pendant les milliers d’années – mais on fait
des projets qui durent un ou deux ans sur un sujet – c’est vraiment un grain de sable dans le
milieu qu’on cherche à conserver. » (trans. It is difficult to accomplish long-term projects –
always projects to create or develop something but nothing sustained in the long-term. It is hard
to have a long-term vision like that. As such, the habitats are here during thousands of years but
we do projects that last one or two years. The effect is like a grain of sand on the projects that we
look to make a difference in)

With his thoughtful perspective, Jonathan has managed to get funds for conservation work in
the IBA, largely focused on restoration of fish habitat. I questioned him why fish habitat and not
bird habitat? He responded: “Présentement, il y a beaucoup de subventions pour les poissons et
pas beaucoup pour les oiseaux. – C’est lié. Intégrer les aspect de biodiversité va apporter du
financement – Il faut trouver un chemin.” (trans. Presently there are many grants available to
do work on fish and not much on birds. They are connected. It’s about integrating biodiversity
that brings funding. It’s about finding a way to do things, the best path.”

Some of the bird activities that he is developing are aimed largely at public awareness. Two
examples he told us about were conducting guided outings on snow shoes in the winter that
would be advertised in the local papers with the goal of connecting people to nature. He
lamented that this connection is missing in most people. « On voit la nature plus comme un
voyage ou un loisir ou une sortie qu’une partie intégrale de notre vie » (trans. We see nature
more like a trip or a recreational activity than something essential to their lives (which is should
be).
With this thought in mind, we said our adieus, Jonathan apparently inspired by the networking potential through the IBA Caretaker Network, and BirdLife, and us marvelling at the depth and thoughtfulness of his responses.

**Case Study 5. Cap Tourmente**

Our final IBA destination was Cap Tourmente, located on the north shore of the St Lawrence River approximately 55 km downstream from Québec City. Like Pointe-au-Père, Cap Tourmente is a National Federal Wildlife Area. Unlike Pointe-au-Père, Cap Tourmente has managed to keep a solid funding base, largely through a “friends of” organization (Les Amis du Cap Tourmente). The result is a large and impressive nature-interpretive presence and facilities with buildings, a store and canteen, washrooms, and well developed and maintained trail system that accesses the site’s rich habitats. Within the IBA there are four main habitat types: intertidal marsh, coastal marsh, coastal plain, and a mixed-forest plateau. The Cap Tourmente intertidal marsh, which is especially significant for staging Snow Geese, is part of the vast bulrush marshes that have developed along the North Channel of Ile d’Orléans, and Montmagny Islands in the St Lawrence River. In all, these marshes occupy 2,500 ha and include close to 60% of all the bulrush marshes in Québec.

During spring migration, Cap Tourmente hosts practically the entire population of the Greater Snow Goose (*ssp. atlanticus*). A significant proportion also stages here during the fall migration as well. At the turn of the century fewer than 3,000 individuals remained. The population has since expanded: a recent spring survey (1996) estimated a population of about 585,100. At the peak of migration more than 50,000 Greater Snow Geese can be observed daily on the Cap
Tourmente mud flats and marshes. During recent years, the geese have started to expand their staging area. Lake Saint-Pierre and northern Lake Champlain to the southwest have become increasingly significant sites, especially during the spring.

Impressive numbers of all waterfowl species are also present in the lowlands during the nesting season and on migration. Numerous land birds are also present, including the nationally endangered Anatum subspecies of the Peregrine Falcon. In all, more than 250 bird species have been identified at Cap Tourmente. It is one of the premiere bird watching destinations in Eastern Canada.

Anne-Marie, Marilyn and I met Vanessa Dufresne, who works for the Association des Amis du Cap Tourmente, in the canteen and store. Vanessa is a biologist who is also a recent enthusiastic convert to the pastime of birding. As noted earlier, there are relatively few female birders in Québec, so as a male birder I felt privileged to find myself as a minority.

Cap Tourmente is “the Cadillac” of IBAs with its formal protection and superb infrastructure. Vanessa noted that there has been strong funding support from Environment Canada (who owns the National Wildlife Area portion of the property), and more recently, the Mountain Equipment Co-op, a Cooperative retailer specializing in outdoor gear and clothing. We discussed the potential value that Cap Tourmente could have as a centre where training opportunities and workshops could take place for the Québec Caretaker Network. There seemed no end to this potential. Vanessa knows about the IBA program and was very interested in filling the role as Caretaker.

Most of our discussion centred around Cap Tournemt’s “sentiers ornithologiques” or birding trails. Vanessa explained the project and its intention at both monitoring birds in Cap Tourmente’s various habitats, while engaging the public in citizen science.

The IBA has six bird population sampling routes, each with a standard protocol for monitoring birds, including five minute timed stops at fixed points, and a certain amount of time to cover the entire route (between 120 and 150 minutes). Volunteer birders – with the ability to identify birds by sound, are provided with a back pack containing recording sheets, a guide book, a map, first aid kit, and bear spray (cayenne pepper spray). Upon returning from their census, volunteers provide the information gathered to Vanessa, or one of the staff, and after verification, is entered onto the web. http://www.captourmente.com/

Vanessa stressed to us that the objective of the project is more about informing the public and engaging people in citizen science rather than scientific monitoring per se : “Ce n’est pas dans un but scientifique – mais pour informer le public.”
The goal of Les Amis de Cap Tourmente is to have two surveys conducted each week on each of the routes. 2009 was the first year of the project and generally speaking it has worked well.

We marvelled at this project, thinking what a great model it could provide for other IBAs. In the very least, we looked forward to the opportunity to share the story of Cap Tourmente’s birding trails with the network.

After talking inside, we headed out to the marsh trail before dark. The trail was largely boardwalked, and lead us through lowlands and swampy forest to the edge of the expansive wetlands that border this part of the Saint Lawrence. Arriving at the wetlands, we were hidden from the birds by impressive blinds – surely something that the folks in Sept-Îles should see. On the other side of the viewing portals was the full spectacle of Cap Tourmente – tens of thousands of Snow geese and thousands of other waterfowl, nourishing themselves and establishing bonds in the super productive wetlands of the IBA. This was a reassuring image to end this small assessment of the Québec IBA network: indeed the network is healthy and Caretakers will make it even stronger.
Appendix 4

British Columbia IBA Caretaker Network

As part of our work to establish a network of Caretakers for Canadian IBAs, Nature Canada conducted an evaluation of the early experiences in British Columbia (BC) in implementing an IBA Caretaker Network in early 2009.

The evaluation methodology involved a review of existing program documentation, as well as phone and email interviews with program staff and six of the Caretakers. Caretakers were selected based on their level of engagement with the program to date, with attempts made to reach people who were active participants as well as those who had not yet been actively contributing to the program in order to diversify the responses we received.

The BC program is a partnership program of BC Nature (the Nature Canada affiliate in BC) and Bird Studies Canada (BC Regional office). The program is coordinated by a steering committee made up of a BC Nature volunteer, a BSC staff member, and two part-time, contract IBA staff people. The steering committee reports to the respective boards of BC Nature and BSC, but within its mandate is free to set program goals and work plans, and make decisions on staffing, recruitment of Caretakers, funding and communications. Funding comes from a variety of sources, some of which were affected by the global recession, which will potentially impact the program’s capacity to some extent.

Areas of evaluation included coverage of IBAs by the Caretaker network, demographic and location information on Caretakers, recruitment and coordination issues, communication materials, impact of Caretakers, as well as case-study interviews with Caretakers that detailed individual experiences, successes and challenges.

Key results paint a picture of the status of the IBA Caretaker Network in BC, and provide useful learnings that are being applied to the development and implementation of the national IBA Caretaker Network. Currently, 93% of IBAs in BC have Caretakers matched to them (78 of the province’s 84 IBAs). Some IBAs have many Caretakers and some Caretakers have many IBAs. At the time of the evaluation, 41 individuals had been identified as primary Caretakers for the 76 sites, and 16 sites had secondary or tertiary Caretakers as well. Seven of the Caretakers were volunteering for multiple sites. Almost two-thirds of Caretakers were members of local naturalist clubs or other NGOs, with several Caretakers working for various government agencies, one for a private business and one for an academic organization. The IBAs that still need Caretakers are remote sites, and additional volunteers are being sought to replace Caretakers who have many IBAs.

Many BC Caretakers, who are volunteers, have been recruited based on existing good relationships between naturalists in the province, but the benefits of outreach to agencies for Caretaker recruitment also played a role. Reporting back to the provincial coordinator on time, an expectation in the BC IBA Caretaker Program, is challenging for a small minority of the BC Caretakers. Caretakers indicated that they would like to be notified of funding opportunities for their local projects, and have access to letters of support for funding applications. Caretakers are looking for a variety of tools to actively conduct monitoring or stewardship and outreach,
including technical brochures, brochures for the general public, maps of boundaries of IBAs, and signage to promote their IBA.

Though the BC Caretaker Program is very young, with some Caretakers only becoming active at their IBAs during spring/summer of 2009, individual Caretakers are already having positive impacts for conservation. For example, Caretakers have revised 23 site summaries, with a further 44 in process of revision. Caretaker activity has resulted in three proposals for new IBAs to be designated. Some Caretakers have presented the IBA program to their local communities but there is opportunity for this to occur more regularly. Based on this evaluation, it is clear that BC Caretakers are dedicated volunteers looking for meaningful ways to impact the conservation status of their local IBAs through diverse activities including educational programming, monitoring, and community awareness building.

Also gratifying for the BC Caretakers program is the knowledge that their experiences are informing the development of the national IBA Caretakers network. This experience and knowledge gets passed on through participation in the IBA Canada Committee and through sharing outreach documents as models or templates for national or regional resources.
Appendix 5

National IBA Program Background

History

In 1996 when Nature Canada and Bird Studies Canada agreed to be the Canadian co-partners in BirdLife International and deliver Canada’s version of Important Bird Areas (IBA). Nature Canada is a national charity with a mandate to protect and conserve wildlife and habitats in Canada by engaging people and advocating on behalf of nature. Nature Canada’s roots and constituency are in the naturalist community across the country where there is a particularly close relationship with affiliated provincial and territorial naturalist federations and organizations. Bird Studies Canada is a national charity that advances the understanding, appreciation, and conservation of wild birds and their habitats. From international partnerships to national initiatives like Project FeederWatch, to regionally-based breeding bird atlases, Bird Studies Canada’s research and monitoring programs engage more than 20,000 volunteer Citizen Scientists each year. Within the context of the Canadian IBA Program, BSC leads the scientific and technical coordination, and maintains the IBA database whereas Nature Canada leads conservation, advocacy and outreach efforts. The partnership between Nature Canada and BSC brings together complementary strengths to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of the program.

The first phase of the IBA program in Canada was a five-year effort beginning in 1996 that focused on site identification. During this period nearly 600 IBAs were recognized as either Global, Continental or National IBAs, with every province and territory represented in the fledgling network of sites. Subsequently, provincial nature conservation organizations were engaged to coordinate the development of conservation plans for selected IBAs and to lead local conservation activities. Approximately 140 plans were elaborated across the country, virtually all of them developed collaboratively by local people with an interest or stake in the IBA, and written by conservation planners.

Though not legally protected in Canada, the IBA recognition for a site has credibility in most countries. This comes from the scientific basis for the designation – numbers of birds that meet one or more of the four standard criteria that apply to all IBAs on the globe – the presence of: threatened species; range restricted species; biome restricted species; or over one percent of individuals for a species at the national, continental or global scale.

The Government of Canada was a critical partner in these early years, providing generous financial support through its Millennium Fund program and strong in-kind support in Environment Canada and its Canadian Wildlife Service in a science advisory role, by championing the program within the department, and by promoting and communicating the program’s value to provincial government wildlife agencies. EC-CWS staff also provided large volumes of bird population data – information which proved critical for evaluating sites for IBA designation. In some cases, EC-CWS staff acted as regional site compilers and local points of contact for the program.
The national program suffered a diminished profile after 2002 as major funding sources ended. A notable exception to this was Nature Canada’s Communities in Action program, which secured and transferred about 1 million dollars in support of over 200 local conservation and education projects at IBAs over several years.

The current focus of the program is to:

- reinvigorate the IBA Program nationally and regionally
- develop a national IBA Caretaker Network to engage citizens in conservation actions at IBAs
- develop monitoring protocols and systems to report on bird populations at IBAs
- cultivate awareness of IBAs among decision and policy makers, so that IBAs achieve greater consideration in planning and regulatory processes
- re-establish a national technical committee to data submitted in site summaries and consider requests for new IBA creation or boundary modification.

**Governance**

The Canadian National partners of BirdLife, Nature Canada and Bird Studies Canada, meet regularly and have close relationships between key staff, to ensure effective coordination of the IBA program. Key components, such as the IBA Website, and the IBA Master Plan are essentially the fruits of this collaboration, which is formalized in a MOU. As a result of broad interest in developing the IBA Caretaker Network, and the development of a National Strategic plan for the Canadian IBA program, the IBA Canada Committee was formed with representation from both national partners, and each regional partner, including Nature Québec, BC Nature, Nature Alberta, and Nature Saskatchewan (in 2009-2010). Representatives from these groups meet by phone conference regularly throughout the year, and on a face to face basis annually to provide direction and oversight to the program. A Communications subcommittee of the National Committee was formed, given the importance of communicating information to the public, decision makers, sponsors, and participants in the Caretakers network. A number of tools have been and are being developed to facilitate communication including a national website (www.ibacanada.ca), a webspace in the Canadian Nature Network portal (www.canadiannaturenetwork.ca), provincial websites, and a range of tools including information pamphlets, newsletters, posters and of course, signage. Given the official bilingual nature of Canada, the communications materials are produced in both English and French. A Fundraising subcommittee was also formed to coordinate fund raising efforts between national and regional partners.
References


Numerous site summaries from the IBA Canada website [www.ibacanada.ca](http://www.ibacanada.ca)