White Point keeps hopping

*Oryctolagus cuniculus*—otherwise known as the domestic rabbit—is one of the most successful stories of animal evolution. To sum it up, rabbits have adapted to thrive just about anywhere.

But bunnies are not typically what vacationers expect to find at the beach. That is, unless it’s at White Point Beach Resort, a short drive from Liverpool on Nova Scotia’s scenic South Shore.

A popular draw for many visitors and an unexpected treat for others, White Point’s free-range rabbits have become the unofficial “brand” of the resort, which itself has evolved and thrived through many changes over its 80-plus years.

“We’re all about the bunnies,” says White Point Manager Danny Morton, only partly tongue-in-cheek.

A new children’s book, *I Spy a Bunny*, was set here, Morton adds. The book, recently released at the resort by Nova Scotia’s Nimbus Publishing, was inspired by local author Judy Dudar’s first visit to White Point.

The bunny theme that infuses the resort’s marketing campaign “just evolved over time,” explains Danny Morton. The rabbits were started the colony more than 20 years ago when they freed the resort’s pet rabbits from their pen to interact with guests.

In many ways, the evolution of White Point resembles the rabbit’s own: unique, enduring and adaptive.

White Point’s setting is exceptional. The resort is tucked along a triangular isthmus between two lakes on one side and the Atlantic Ocean—with a kilometre-long stretch of white sand—on the other. Guests are treated to 360 degrees of spectacular shoreline views.

The resort began in 1928 as a hunting and fishing retreat with a smattering of beach cabins and a small lodge. Tennis courts and a golf course came a few years later. Notable clientele included author Zane Grey, who came for the tuna fishing, and Nova Scotia entrepreneur Roy Jodrey.

Today, although White Point still reflects its original charm in a restored main lodge and proudly displayed memorabilia, it has grown into a 160-room full-service operation. Like many resorts, White Point hosts seasonal vacationers and big events from business meetings to weddings and reunions.

But that’s where similarities cease. Reading through a list of “things to do” provides a clue. Along with golf, kayaking and day hikes—at nearby Kejimkujik Seaside Adjunct—White Point offers up cross-country ski trails. And just a couple of years ago, White Point hosted the ISA World Junior Surfing Championships—in the middle of winter.
White Point is open year-round too. “Everybody in the tourism industry thought we were absolutely nuts,” says Morton, “but lo and behold, we are here.”

The payoff has been huge. White Point has the most repeat customers of any resort in Atlantic Canada.

It’s all part of the need to evolve. And for White Point, that means being a place at which visitors can have fun any time of the year. “We are very much an event-based, activity-based destination,” says Morton.

Morton came on board in the late ’80s, and the two struck up a partnership that has seen the implementation of many of the resort’s unique and cutting-edge programs, including all-season operation. “The advantage of being in a small business,” Morton says about the resort’s programs, “is if you have a good idea today you can be doing it tomorrow.”

White Point has ISO 9000 certification, a worldwide independently audited standard for quality management that is unusual for a resort. But it’s not unusual for White Point’s corporate clients, who use the customer-service criterion themselves.

The resort was a provincial leader in environmental responsibility and sustainability, making “green” a part of its mission nearly 20 years ago. Staff initiated area cleanup campaigns prior to the Adopt-A-Highway program of which it’s now part.

White Point is the only resort in Atlantic Canada to offer a vacation time-share program. And, according to Morton, it’s the most popular/most requested time-share in Canada.

White Point is also in the vacation home ownership, rental and real estate business.

But White Point has really always been about the people: families who return generation after generation, long-time clients who use the same cottage year after year, newcomers enchanted by the experience.

“It’s very much a people business,” says Morton, “we have customers who brought their children, and now their children are bringing their own children. It’s amazing some days to walk through the dining room and see 8, 10 or 12 babies together; there are times that we don’t have enough high chairs.”

White Point has evolved through generations.

Which brings us back to those bunnies. Rabbits may resemble other warm, furry critters, but as with White Point, they’re in a class (technically, mammalian order Lagomorpha) by themselves.