

Volume VIII - March 2014

Annual General Meeting (Sat March 29th, 2014) and Spring Talks

If you've missed out on the last two fabulous presentations in our winter talk series – on Bats and Antarctica, never fear, as we have more to come!



On Saturday, March 29th at 2:00pm, MTRI's Ecosystem Researcher Alain Belliveau will be giving a presentation on "The Flora of Nova Scotia". Alain's wealth of botanical knowledge and beautiful plant photos are not to be missed. The presentation will be followed at 3:00pm by MTRI's annual AGM. Everyone is welcome.



Our April speaker will be expert angler and trout researcher, Reg Baird, who will speak about Nova Scotia's Trout.

In May, Jill Francis, Interpreter at Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site, will give a Mi'kmaq heritage talk; details to be confirmed.

For more details nearer the time, keep an eye on our website or like our Facebook page.



Big Sea Swimmers!

Our annual March break event, held on Saturday March 8th, was a great success thanks to several engaging speakers, some fascinating information booths, and many volunteer hours of work from our dedicated Education and Communication Committee members. Over 100 people attended the event, which featured presentations on whales and sharks by expert big sea swimmer speakers from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Dalhousie University, Brier Island Whale and Seabird Cruises, and the Bedford Institute of Oceanography.

There were several information booths too. The Marine Animal Rescue Society brought a whale rescue harness, including a full size inflatable whale! Staff from the Ecology Action Centre were on hand with lots of information about their marine issues work and brought Hector the Shark and Tina the Tuna along for the kids to meet. And outside, to greet everyone as they arrived with an authentic marine smell, real Mako and Porbeagle sharks (frozen) were on display!



Big Sea Swimmers continued

The kids were also busy making whale and sea turtle crafts, learning how big a whale can be, and hearing author Kelly Foxton read her book "Mother Nature Knows". The day was rounded off with a fun quiz and a great prize draw.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make the day happen!



Rare Lichens Project Continues its Success!

Since 2008, MTRI, Environment Canada, and the Nova Scotia Government, along with partners in the forest industry like Port Hawkesbury Paper and Northern Pulp, have been working hard to conserve Boreal Felt Lichen (BFL) (Endangered). The project continued its amazing success in 2013. Tom Neily continued to search for lichens in predicted habitat throughout Nova Scotia from Shelburne county to Cape Breton county and make amazing discoveries.



In 2013, Tom and Chris Pepper (a new lichenologist protege), found an unprecedented 113 trees with BFL on them. Two large concentrations were found at Sandy Cove and McPhail Lake in Halifax County. McPhail Lake appears to contain a very large portion of the known BFL population in Nova

Scotia and rather than a few scattered trees there are 44 trees on approximately 200 Ha that support BFL.

Many other rare lichen species benefit from this project as well. On a trip with Frances Anderson, the first mainland occurrences of Frosted Glass-whiskers (Special Concern) in Nova Scotia was found and several new sites were found for Vole Ears (Endangered) and Blue Felt Lichen (Special Concern).

Despite all of this good news, Boreal Felt Lichen monitoring has revealed that 17 known host trees no longer have Boreal Felt Lichen on them. Of the 35 BFL sites known before 2008 only 7 remain. We still need to learn a lot about the life cycle of this species and what factors lead to its disappearance. A temperature and humidity study of BFL habitat is underway in partnership with Nova Scotia DNR and DoE, which might begin to reveal some of those habitat requirements.

Bat Monitoring in Nova Scotia

MTRI partnered with Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources last June to develop and release www.batconservation.ca. The site is an easy way for Nova Scotians to report where they are seeing bats which are currently experiencing huge declines due to an exotic invasive fungus that causes White-nose Syndrome, and eventually death from starvation or hypothermia.



After a media blitz in radio, newspaper, and television the response was more than we could have expected with over 1100 sightings of bats from around 300 phone calls and around 800 web submissions. This information provided valuable insights into where Nova Scotians saw bats, where they were seeing less bats than in the past, and where they knew of large roost sites. It also revealed that people were seeing smaller groups of bats than they had seen in previous years. This information will be invaluable when planning conservation efforts.

The website currently is "in hibernation" (like the bats hopefully are) and all sightings of daytime flying bats should be submitted to the Department of Natural Resources. In the early summer, the website will open again to take submissions of bat sightings and will also feature a new section on how to get involved in monitoring bat roost sites.

Thank you to all of those who submitted their sightings to www.batconservation.ca!

Fundraising



MTRI's fundraising initiative for the Blanding's Turtle Recovery Project is off to a great start! In December 2013, MTRI was thrilled to receive a substantial donation from Marjorie Lindsey to kick off the campaign. This donation will help staff and volunteer researchers protect Blanding's turtle nests from predation

and flooding, search for new Blanding's turtle populations, identify important habitats, work with landowners, and more. Thank you so much Marjorie! We still have a long way to go to reach our goal. If you would like to donate to the Blanding's turtle project or MTRI's other species at risk initiatives, please click on the PayPal link on the right of our webpage or contact us about other ways to donate!

Report your Ribbonsnake Sightings!

Spring will soon be here and ribbonsnakes will begin emerging from their overwintering sites. They typically begin emerging on warm spring days in late March or early April. Keep an eye out for them in woods, on roads, and around the edges of wetlands.



Information on sightings at this time is particularly valuable as it helps us figure out where snakes spend the winter and how they travel between winter and summer sites. If you see a ribbonsnake, please report the sighting to <http://www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings> or call 1-866-727-3447.

Farewell!

MTRI is sad to report that it will be losing two long-term staff members this spring/summer.



Wendy Whynot, our Administrative Coordinator, has been the linchpin of the office since 2008, and will be greatly missed by staff and members alike. Wendy has been a loyal and dedicated team member, always ready to lend a helping hand, and has often been a sea of calm amidst a sometimes chaotic field season, not to mention feeding many a workshop-goer! Wendy and her family are relocating to New Brunswick over the summer.

Alain Belliveau, our Ecosystems Researcher, first came to MTRI as a summer student back in 2007. He returned the following year, and once again after finishing his Master's degree. Alain's forestry and botanical knowledge and photographic, mapping, and graphic design skills have been a tremendous asset to MTRI over the years. Alain has taken a position with the Atlantic Canada Conservation Data Centre.



We would like to wish both Wendy and Alain the very best of luck in their new life adventures and hope that they'll be back to visit soon!

Thank you and good luck!