



Fredericton Nature Club/ Club de la nature de Fredericton

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Newsletter

January - May 2009

Dear Fredericton Nature Club Members!

Now that the icy grip of winter has sent all but the bravest birds southward, the bugs and salamanders deep underground, and the plants into dormancy, its time for some tough Canadian naturalists to get out and find the hidden gems of winter! We have a slew of presentations this session, and some field trips for the brave (or at least warmly dressed).

The fall presentations were well attended and received but the outings were a bit of a mixed result. Two outings were cancelled because of poor weather - a heavy rain washed out our trip to Saint John for fossils, and snow made our trip to Jemseg a liability. But Jim Goltz led a nice outing to the Mactaquac area and we had a good day birding in Saint John (see summary later on).

Please don't forget to renew your annual club memberships. As well, a number of the executive positions are vacant so help out if you can! We also would love to have people lead outings - you don't need to be an expert - just know of a good place for an outing. *GJF*

FNC Executive

President: Graham Forbes
Treasurer: Jo-anne Stillwell
Membership: Vacant (G. Forbes)
Newsletter: Vacant (G. Forbes)
Nature NB Rep.: Glenda Turner
Publicity: Vacant (G. Forbes)
Our Genial Monthly Host: Don Gibson

Location and Meeting Times

Date: First Wednesday of each month (starting in October)

Location: The Stepping Stone Centre
15 Saunders Street
Fredericton

Across the road from YMCA
Lots of parking
Easy access

Time: Monthly meetings start at 7 p.m.

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Fredericton Nature Club Membership for 2008-2009

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

- \$20 Individual Membership
 \$25 Family Membership

Please mail form to:

Fredericton Nature Club
PO Box 772, Station A
Fredericton NB E3B 5B4

Calendar of Events

Indoor Stuff

All talks take place at
The Stepping Stone Centre, 7 p.m.

January 7; Winter Stream Ecology: Where do all the Salmon Go? with Rick Cunjak

The Atlantic salmon has played an important role in the culture and ecology of New Brunswick - as such it has been well-studied. Little however is known about their activities and biology in winter time. Dr. Rick Cunjak is a Canada Research Chair at the University of New Brunswick and has spent a career studying the Atlantic Salmon within the rivers of the Maritimes. Come learn about how salmon of different ages survive, where they live, and all about frazzle in New Brunswick.

February 4; Members Night! with 'you'

This popular event allows members to share stories on their nature observations, a recent trip, or some insights on the world around us (no politics, please!). There also will be a contest (with 1st prize a signed Robert Bateman print- Prothonotary Warbler) for identifying photos of birds. Please send me digital pictures by Jan. 20 - they should be of species you identified but not a picture that makes it too easy to identify - maybe the head is hidden, or the feet, or its in a strange position. Members will guess at the species and whoever gets the most correct, wins.

March 4; Birds and Islands in the South Pacific
with Antony Diamond

Tony and Dorothy spent a sabbatical in and around New Zealand this year, visiting a number of exotic locales such as the Seychelles and Christmas Island. Come here about the conservation of rare seabirds and landbirds in a distant part of the planet.

April 1; Why so darn many bugs ? Because they are such picky eaters! with Steve Heard.

Spring brings buds, and bugs spring on the buds (sorry). UNB Biology professor, Steve Heard studies the relationships between insects and plants - a fascinating battle of strategies and choices that explains much of what you may see in your garden or woods.

Outdoor Stuff

Most outings begin at the Odell Park parking lot. Times vary - check below.

Sunday January 11

Seeking Rough-Legged Hawks with Graham Forbes or Don Gibson

Our fall outing was snowed out but the hawks are now in, and a good number of owls are being reported this winter so we thought we would try again. Weather permitting we'll be looking for Rough-Legged Hawks, shrikes, and hoping for a Snowy Owl. We meet first at Odell Park at **11:50 a.m.** and leave at **12:00** sharp.

Saturday March 21

Owl Prowl with Graham Forbes

Owls begin calling and establishing territories in early spring and there are few experiences like hearing owls making a ruckus. We will drive the roads adjacent to a few good sites and try for Great Horned, Barred, and Saw-whet Owls. Meet at 7:50 for 8:00 pm departure at Odell Park. We should be back by 10:00 pm.

Saturday April 11

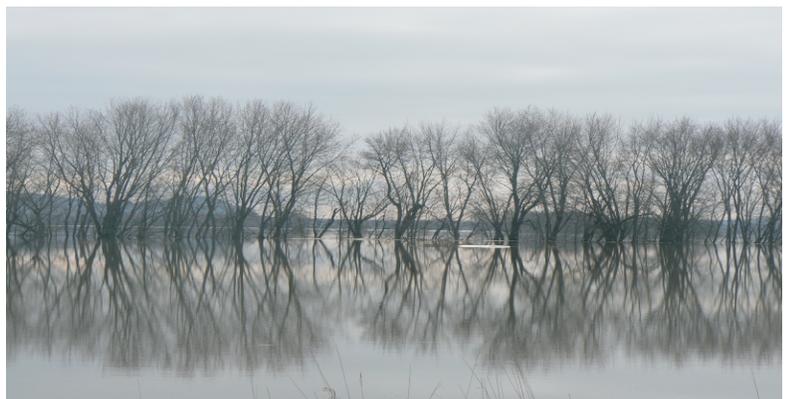
Annual 'Feathers on the Floodplain'

We are fortunate to have the flooded St. John River attract so many waterfowl and shorebirds. Last year's flooding was a bit much so hopefully the roads will remain open! Meet at 8:50 at Odell Park, for 9:00 departure. Bring a lunch, and a friend.

Sunday May 24

Spring

Birds will be singing and plants blooming so come join us a walk in one of the Fredericton area hotspots for nature. Meet at Odell Park at 7:50 for an 8:00 departure. Bring a lunch.



Message from the President

1. **Some sad news.** If you were unaware, one of our members, Catherine Gibson, wife of Don Gibson passed away this autumn. We wish to pass on our condolences to Don, family and friends and recognize Cathy's contributions and support of the FNC. As well, it is with sadness that we announce the passing of Enid Inch, last winter. Enid was not a member of the FNC but she, and her feeders, often a good place for a rarity, were well known to naturalists in the Gagetown area.

2. **Summary of Questionnaire:** Last year, I asked for some feedback from the membership regarding the types of presentations offered by the club. I received 11 responses. Here are the results:

A) Favourite Topic (ranked in order of preference): 1) Birds, 2) Mammals, 3) Flowers/Plants, 4) Forests, 5) Reptiles and Amphibians, 6) Insects, 7) Fish, 8) Geology, 9) Stars/Planets.

B) Proportion of management topics versus natural history: Increased Management = 0; Increased Natural History = 1; Same as Existing = 10

C) Local or International Focus: 3/4 Local and 1/4 International = 10; 1/2 Local and 1/2 International = 1; 1/4 Local and 3/4 International = 0; All Local = 0; All International = 0.

D) Level of outings: Too basic = 0; Just Right = 11; Too Challenging = 0

To summarize, and if 11 respondents is representative of the club, the presentation topics:

1) can be diverse but preference is for birds, mammals and plants; 2) are presented at an appropriate mix of natural history and management; 3) should be usually of a local subject matter but international subjects are warranted, and 4) the outings are of an appropriate delivery in terms of activity and content. The following outings were suggested: Fundy Coast, Deer Island, Grand Manan Weekend, Sackville Waterfowl Park, Cape Jourmain, UNB Observatory, Fundy National Park, CFB Gagetown, Nashwaaksis Stream Nature Park, and 'Square Bashing' for the Breeding Bird Atlas, with presentations on: Breeding Bird Atlas, Maritime Nest Records Scheme

Thankyou for your feedback and we will try to offer the outings and talks as identified.

3. **50th Anniversary.....**Members at the December meeting decided that the club should celebrate the 50th Anniversary in 2010. Several activities are planned and please help out where you can.

A) Naturalists Day at Odell Park...we will set up information booths at Odell Park and members will lead nature walks in the Park.

B) A History of the Fredericton Nature Club....a booklet outlining the people and activities of a club that has been active for many years. Please submit stories, anecdotes and photos.

C) Update on Regional Bird List

D) Promote the protection of a natural area (eg. Hyla Park).

Contact Graham Forbes(forbes@unb.ca)

Outing to Saint John _ October 19, 2008.....With recent sightings of Laughing Gull and Hudsonian Godwit spurring us down Highway 7, 10 members of the Fredericton Nature Club embarked on a recent mid-Autumn trip to Saint John. The skies were sunny, then cloudy and the temperature hovered below 5°C for much of the morning. But, there is nothing like a good bird to draw you to a sewage lagoon in October! Alas, the Laughing Gull was absent, and only 15 or so gulls (mainly Herring and Ring-billed, with a few Great Black-backed Gulls) were at the Lancaster Waste Treatment site. Waterfowl were plentiful though – 10 Canada Geese, 4 Shoveler, 2 Gadwall, 11 American Widgeon, 20 Scaup (I thought they were Greaters but I don't recall us discussing it °!), 10 Bufflehead (who doesn't love those guys!°) and a lovely Ruddy Duck – a Ruddy Duck in New Brunswick is a nice sighting and it helped warm up the hands. The creek and trail at the gate is often good for something different and we had Swamp and Savannah Sparrows, plus a Lesser Yellowlegs.

Our next stop took us to the shoreline at Saint's Rest Marsh where we hoped for some seaducks but it was rather sparse – no eiders or gulls, or Black Guillemot but there was a Common Loon and 10 Surf Scoters bobbing along about 400m from the beach. We drove along the Irving Nature Park with Sam Perrin, a naturalist with Irving, who foolishly told us what she had seen earlier and we feigned enough ignorance of her directions that she offered to lead us. The tide was coming in and thus much of the shorebird activity was far from our observation point and, at over 1km, its hard to scope a shorebird to species. But the view was nice. Around the corner gave us a White-winged Scoter in the Bay, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk overhead (strangely, our only raptor of the day). We had a quick view of 30-40 Pine Siskins, but we did not spend time in the woods on this trip and passerines were not likely. A highlight was 2 grebes below the observation platform. We oscillated between Horned and Red-necked Grebe in winter plumage; the necks were too long for Horned Grebe, but the side plumage was quite white, indicating Horned Grebe. We settled on Horned Grebe, but, because no one can stop me as I write this (!) I am calling them as Red-necks. I have seen both species many times, and although these were fairly far off, we had a good, from-above view. The necks were elongated and the birds quite large; Horned Grebes are similar in size to Pied-billed Grebe (around 12 inches) and these were too large to be Pied-billed. Red-necked Grebes are much larger, at 20 inches. I cannot account for the white sides on our birds and so there is that nagging bit of doubt, which I choose to ignore!

Our last stop was to Marsh Creek in industrial Saint John, and although not the prettiest locale for birding ,it does provide a good look at shorebirds and waterfowl at the end of Hannover Street. A Hudsonian Godwit had been sighted a few days earlier but we lucked out on that one. There were lots of shorebirds though – I counted 38 Black-bellied Plover, 12 Dunlin, 20 Semi-palmated Plover, and 1 Lesser Yellowleg (he must have followed us from the morning). There were about 40 Green-winged Teal, which looked fantastic in the sunlight, as did 4 Gadwall and few Widgeon. There were more Black Duck than I wanted to count, as were the gulls, mostly Herring Gull. It was now 2 pm, and with a 1 hour drive home, we decided to wrap up the day. Just as the last 2 cars were pulling out, a bird flew past and landed in a heavily-laden Mountain Ash, but only stayed for a few seconds before flying off into the Marsh. I tried to make it into a Hudsonian Godwit but it was Northern Mockingbird, and a nice ending.....Graham Forbes

