



## Fredericton Nature Club/ Club de la nature de Fredericton

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Newsletter

September -December 2009

Dear

### Fredericton Nature Club Members!

I hope everyone had a lovely summer (in the rain) and now that the summer heat is gone (after only a few weeks!), its time to start up the Club activities again. Of note, the Club's 50th Anniversary begins in the New Year - more information on that will be coming shortly. This fall, we have 3 presentations and 4 outings as well as a unique event wherein the FNC is co-hosting (with Nature NB) the annual meeting of the NB Environmental Network, October 2-4 at Renaissance College, downtown Fredericton. The NBEN supports various environmental groups in NB and by co-hosting, it is hoped there could be more interaction among naturalists and environmental groups. Besides the meetings, two field trips are being held. More information can be found at [http://nben.ca/AGA\\_09\\_e.htm](http://nben.ca/AGA_09_e.htm). Try to attend.

Also, please don't forget to renew your annual club memberships. And, a number of the executive positions are vacant...hint, hint.... GJF

Our webpage:

[fnc.gbnature.com](http://fnc.gbnature.com)

### 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 2009-2010

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.

#### October 7: **Vernal Pools: Ecology of Ephemeral Ponds** with Lucy Lavoie

Vernal (or spring) pools fill up from snowmelt then dry-up over summer. Because they lack fish these pools are important breeding sites for many amphibians and insects, and as such are being assessed for their role in biodiversity and forest management. Lucy is a biologist with Dept. Natural Resources and conducted graduate research on vernal pools.

#### November 4: **Environmental Impact Assessment in New Brunswick** with David Maguire.

Large development projects can be good for the economy but also have an impact on the environment. It is the job of government managers to assess proposals, offer mitigation and ideally, help ensure that society can have a healthy economy and ecosystem. Dave is a senior member of the Dept. of Environment's EIA group and will lead us through this important aspect of sustainable development

#### December 2: TBA (please look at the pretty picture for now!)



### Outdoor Stuff

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

#### Sunday September 13 **Trails of Mactaquac Park** with Graham Forbes

There are some lovely trails beside beaverponds and brooks in Mactaquac Park that should produce a range of plants and animals for us to discover. Meet at Odell Park at 7:50 for 8:00 am departure.

#### Sunday October 4 **Exploring the Ecology of Odell Park** with Jim Goltz, Graham Forbes.

Topics to be discussed: protected forest areas, invasive plant species, bird identification and many more. **8:30 - 11:30**. This is a joint outing with the NBEN conference (see page 1).

#### Sunday October 18 **Mt. Greenlaw Hawk Watch**

There have been good numbers of raptors migrating along Mt. Greenlaw (near St. Croix). The site is private land and so we can take a maximum of 12 members. **Sign-up with Graham**. We will depart Odell Park at **8:00 am**. Bring a lunch.

#### Saturday November 21 **Seeking Rough-Legged Hawks**

We tried twice last year but the weather was against us. This year, I 'promise' that it will not snow, or rain! We will be looking for the usual highlights (Rough-Legged Hawks, shrikes, Snowy Owl) and hoping for an oddity or two. Bring a lunch. We meet first at Odell Park at **7:50 a.m.** and leave at **8:00 a.m.** sharp.

#### Sunday December 20 **The Christmas Bird Count**

Our all-day Christmas Bird Count ends with a **potluck dinner** at **5:30 p.m.** at The Stepping Stone Centre. Don Gibson is the coordinator, 454-3261.

## Message from the President



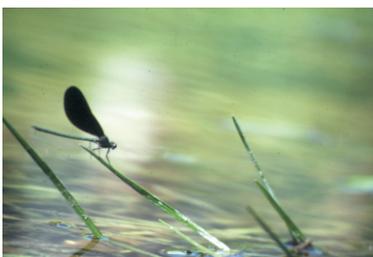
1. **50th Anniversary.....**As mentioned earlier, members at the December 2008 meeting decided that the club should celebrate the 50th Anniversary in 2010. We will have a special Member's Night/Celebration during one of our monthly meetings this winter. The two main activities agreed to last year were:

A) **Nature Day at Odell Park.** The idea is to celebrate nature, our 50th and increase appreciation among the public by holding a Nature Day next summer. We will set up information booths at Odell Park on various aspects of nature (eg. bird and mammal displays, pressed plants, freshwater mussels, etc...) and members will lead nature walks in the Park. Be fore-warned, I will come looking for help!!

B) **A History of the Fredericton Nature Club.** We thought it would be appropriate to document and present an overview of the Club's activities over the last 50 years. There have been many members, executives, field trips and presentations. Depending on how much information we receive, we will produce a booklet or 1000 page tome. Please let em know if you pictures, or stories - I suspect not all the outings went smoothly!

2. **Nature NB Annual Meeting....** We had discussed the possibility of Fredericton hosting an annual meeting of Nature NB, and felt we should not because we had hosted it in the recent past. This summer, Nature NB asked if Oromocto might wish to host the meeting, possibly as part of its Celebration of Birds activities. I was asked if FNC were willing to assist because the Oromocto group is not large, and there is general difficulty in finding hosts other than the larger clubs like Saint John, Moncton and Fredericton who have the membership to undertake the annual meeting. To date, decisions have not been finalized but I did offer support from FNC, possibly in the leading of some field trips.

3. **Biodiversity Strategy...**The provincial government recently released its Biodiversity Strategy. The document outlines how government plans to document the richness of wildlife in NB, and assess if changes are significant. Since populations fluctuate, and even species come and go, it is the assessment of significant change, and follow-up action that will be most important. The changes will be compared to thresholds that will be established by government. For more information, see the webpage ??????





## ANNUAL WATERFOWL TRIP - APRIL 11, 2009

By Graham Forbes

Spring sun brings waterfowl fun along the St. Jun. Our annual walk in rain boots was a good one last April. Last year, the exceptional flooding had closed the road at Maugerville, but this year we had open road until the Jemseg ferry area. With all the birders in the region, there is a strong chance somebody has reported a 'good bird', even providing detailed directions. Numerous rare/uncommon birds had been sighted along the flooded St. John River from Maugerville to Jemseg and with high hopes 7 members of the FNC hit the puddles. Often, we have a nice outing, but miss the rare birds. Not this year!

It was a bit chilly at 1°C (especially since the day before was 10°C) and ice filled half of the ponds and river, mainly below the new Trans Canada bridge. The river was rather quiet – no rafts of scoter or scaup. A few Common Mergansers were on the river, and we started the day with a fantastic, fully-extended male Hooded Merganser who kept displaying, floating downstream, then flying back to the same spot on the river – a female must have been nearby, or maybe he was warming up in front of the mirror.



The waterfowl were in every pond and puddle. Black Duck and Mallard were ubiquitous on every pond while gulls (mainly Ring-billed) and Canada Geese were common but found in clumps on fewer ponds. Green-winged Teal were the common small duck, but we did see 4-6 Blue-winged Teal. American Wigeon were widespread but fewer in number than expected. Several of us commented on the large numbers of Ring-necked Duck – large groups of mainly males floated in the open sections of the ponds, usually up against the trees, farthest from the road – I suspect 300 were in the area. Northern Shoveler and Pintail were found in 4-5 places but usually in small numbers of 2-3. Gadwall, always a harder-to-find species in the area, were spotted 3 times. Wood Duck and Common Goldeneye were in most ponds, as well as within the flooded silver maples along the river edge. We missed out on Eurasian Teal (the European race of Green-winged Teal) and Eurasian Wigeon (European species). Both are seen each year, and were in the area this week – but, they must have been hiding under our Blue-phase Snow Goose!



We tried twice for this beauty. It was reported the day before for McGowan's Corner but we couldn't find it on our downriver trip. An advantage to the Jemseg ferry being of-line (due to the flooding, not the government ) was that we returned by the same route, and heard from Don Gibson where to find the goose. The goose was with 20 or so Canada Geese on field and water behind the farm buildings, and behind an annoying kid on a dirtbike. Snow geese are a good, but regular sighting in New Brunswick – a blue phase (dark body and white head) is much rarer.

Not so rare, but rare to inland waters, was a male Common Eider. It wasn't even on the river, but acting like a puddle duck, bobbing in the flooded field just south of McGowan's Corner.

The trip south of Jemseg was a bit quieter – the flooded road prevented us from getting to far. However, Doug Jackson and Peter Pearce found a single bird at the 'Community Barn' in Upper Jemseg – an Ipswich Sparrow. These birds breed on Sable Island, the sandy, windswept island 150 km off Nova Scotia, and winter along the southern eastern coast. They are a larger and very pale subspecies of Savannah Sparrow. It was a life bird (albeit a subspecies rather than a full species) for all except Peter Pearce, who once found one on a Fredericton Christmas Bird count. I know Doug Jackson was quite pleased to get a lifer, and I was downright giddy – I think everyone should do a lifer dance ! We'll have to work on Doug.

We had a long look at a Mink, and 2 Moose started a 'moose jam' on the highway as cars pulled over. For most of us, we saw our 'first of the year' for Osprey, Tree Swallow, Kestrel, Great Blue Heron, Snipe, Killdeer, and Kingfisher. And we saw some 'last of the year' species – an Iceland Gull stood with Ring-billed Gulls among the ducks near Sheffield. And a Rough-legged Hawk, sitting in a tree above flooded fields was not the image we are used to for this winter visitor. Both species will soon head up to the Arctic to breed.

Finishing off our day was another hoped-for rarity. Again, we had missed this on our first pass but Don pointed us to the spot (we did get the Ipswich Sparrow for Don, so a nice trade). The flooded fields around Casey's Restaurant aren't large and maybe the gulls could also smell french fries because among 15 or so Ring-billed Gulls, was a very nice Lesser Black-backed Gull. Another European species, but likely now breeding in North America, the Lesser is smaller and the back is gray rather than the dark black of our Greater. We also saw Ring-billed Gull # 150, which had been wing-tagged as part of water quality study on December 29, 2008 at a Wal-Mart parking lot in Northborough, Massachusetts.

So, we had a great outing – lots of waterfowl, lots of firsts of the year, a bunch of rarities that stuck around, and discovery of our own rarity. Now, if we can just get Doug to do a lifer dance!

