

THE HALIFAX FIELD NATURALIST



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Return address: HFN, c/o NS Museum of Natural History, 1747 Summer Street, Halifax, NS, B3H 3A6

FIELD TRIPS

COLPITT LAKE

Date: March 18, 2006

Place: Colpitt Lake to Williams Lake

Region: 451a: Granite Uplands; South Mountain

Weather: Cloudy but dry, -3°C;

Participants: 13

Duration: 3.5 hrs

Interpreter: Burkhard Plache

The hike began near the end of Oceanview Drive off Purcell's Cove Road. Within a few minutes we were on a granite plateau from which we could see in the distance the port cranes at Point Pleasant around to the Dutch Village Road area and bits of Dartmouth behind. Further along, looking northwest, we could see Cowie Hill and surroundings. In between were large stretches of mostly deciduous forest, with patches of evergreens, currently uninterrupted by housing or even logging roads — but with encroaching development at the edges. The tree vegetation through most of the walk, until we got close to Williams Lake, was dominated by early successional, fire-tolerant or fire-stimulated species. Jack Pine, White Birch, Large-toothed Aspen, Lambkill (which retains most of its green to rouge-red leaves through winter), and Huckleberry (all leaves had dropped; the new twig growth had the characteristic pink to reddish tinge) were prominent in the understory.

Jack Pines were especially numerous and picturesque on the plateau. Broom-crowberry, Rock-tripe, and other lichens were abundant on barren rock, and also Reindeer Lichens where some soil had accumulated.

We walked to another plateau where we could look southeast across Long Lake and the Captain Arnell lands, and then moved to the ruins of an air defense structure, built in anticipation of a possible German attack in World War II. A photographer in the group pointed out the interesting patterns on the ruin's walls associated with extrusion of lime from the cement. In the late 1700s/1800s there had been a large quarry nearby and part of the trail we took to the ruins apparently ran along an old trolley bed.

From the ruins we proceeded downwards to Colpitt Lake, meeting it close to its eastern extremity, and then walked westward just above the shoreline. Wind blowing onto thin ice where it met the water made unusual, almost musical sounds. Leatherleaf, which keeps its rusty colored leaves through winter, was abundant at the lake's edge, and there were also patches of Inkberry (a member of the holly family) with evergreen leaves. About midway along the lake, we turned onto a trail that would take us to the outflow area of Williams Lake. There were many outcrops, boulders, and high spots along the way. Once we moved away from the plateau, the rocks were rusty, weathering, dark-layered Halifax slates (sometimes called 'ironstone'). This is a region of contact between these slates and the coarse-grained, grey to white granite which outcrops over much of southwest Nova Scotia. Marion Sensen pointed out a nice Ring Lichen which she estimated was about 150 years old, based on a growth rate of 2 mm/year.

We descended into some Leatherleaf-dominated

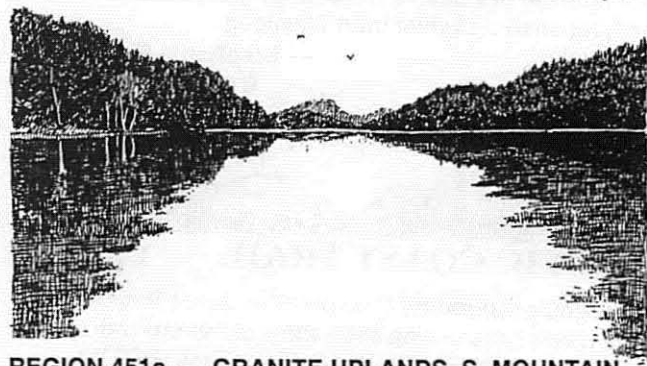
boggy areas as we approached Williams Lake. With some large cranberries providing a snack, we then climbed upwards into the oak/White Pine/Red Spruce woodland that borders Williams Lake, and then down through a ravine as we approached the outflow area. Evergreen fronds of the fern Rock Polypody covered some of the ravine boulders, and we could hear water rushing in the ground below us. Other boulders and rock faces were covered with Plume Moss. Old fire scars could be seen at the bases of some of the large White Pines where post-fire growth had not completely encircled the fire-scarred tissues. (Fire scars revealed in stumps of white pine are commonly used in conjunction with the counting of annual rings to indicate historical frequencies and dates of fires in forested areas.)

Finally, we negotiated our way through the hurricane-blowdown that now obstructs the path leading from a popular Williams Lake swimming area to Herring Cove Road, where we had left some vehicles.

Like other local hikes, this one reminded us of all the beautiful natural treasures we have close by. For a while, we could well have imagined we were hundreds of miles away from 'civilization', instead of the few kilometres that we were. Interestingly, there was not much overt evidence of the military and economic activity that had taken place in this area in years past, and Colpitt Lake today is pretty well pristine. Unfortunately, with the now approved development of the Kimberley-Lloyd property between Colpitt Lake and MacIntosh Run, it is unlikely to remain that way.

Thanks to Pat Chalmers for contributing a detailed species list.

— David Patriquin



REGION 451a — GRANITE UPLANDS, S. MOUNTAIN

Soils — Gibraltar soils derived from granite: coarse-textured, well-drained, and gravelly; shallow, heavily leached, and very acidic, with scattered areas of exposed rock; when unforested, a tendency to form hardpans.

Flora — Red Spruce, Eastern Hemlock, White Pine, Balsam Fir, Red Maple; scattered Red Oak. Fire has played a prominent role.

Fauna — Second-growth mixed forests support only sparse wildlife. Small mammal diversity low to moderate; high populations of White-tailed Deer. Aquatic environments are acidic with low-productivity and support few waterfowl; substantial populations of Smallmouth Bass.



Halifax from the plateau; from a photo by Burkhard Plache

COLPITT LAKE SPECIES

Lichens

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Ring Lichen | <i>Arctoparmelia centrifuga</i> |
| Reindeer Lichen | <i>Cladina</i> sp. |
| Rock Tripe Lichen | <i>Umbilicaria</i> sp. |

Mosses, Ferns, and Allies

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Plume Moss | <i>Ptilium crista-castrensis</i> |
| Clubmoss | <i>Lycopodium</i> sp. |
| Rock Polypody | <i>Polypodium virginianum</i> |
| Bracken | <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> |

Gymnosperms

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------|
| Balsam Fir | <i>Abies balsamea</i> |
| Common Juniper | <i>Juniperus communis</i> |
| White Spruce | <i>Picea glauca</i> |
| Black Spruce | <i>P. mariana</i> |
| Red Spruce | <i>P. rubens</i> |
| Jack Pine | <i>Pinus banksiana</i> |
| White Pine | <i>P. strobus</i> |
| Scotch Pine | <i>P. sylvestris</i> |
| Hemlock | <i>Tsuga canadensis</i> |

Angiosperms

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Striped Maple | <i>Acer pensylvanicum</i> |
| Red Maple | <i>A. rubrum</i> |
| Downy Alder | <i>Alnus crispus</i> |
| Speckled Alder | <i>A. incana</i> |
| Shadbush | <i>Amelanchier</i> sp. |
| White birch | <i>Betula papyrifera</i> |
| Wire Birch | <i>B. populifolia</i> |
| Leatherleaf | <i>Chamaedaphne calyculata</i> |
| Bunchberry | <i>Cornus canadensis</i> |
| Broom-crowberry | <i>Corema conradii</i> |
| Gold-thread | <i>Coptis trifolia</i> |
| Mayflower | <i>Epigaea repens</i> |
| Teaberry | <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i> |
| Black Huckleberry | <i>Gaylussacia baccata</i> |
| Witch-hazel | <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> |
| Inkberry | <i>Ilex glabra</i> |
| Canada Holly | <i>Ilex verticillata</i> |
| Lambkill | <i>Kalmia angustifolia</i> |
| Partridgeberry | <i>Mitchella repens</i> |
| Sweet Gale | <i>Myrica gale</i> |
| Bayberry | <i>M. pensylvanica</i> |
| False Holly | <i>Nemopanthus mucronata</i> |
| Large-tooth Aspen | <i>Populus grandidentata</i> |
| Red Oak | <i>Quercus borealis</i> |
| Rhodora | <i>Rhododendron canadense</i> |
| Cranberry | <i>Vaccinium macrocarpon</i> |
| Witherod | <i>Viburnum cassinoides</i> |
| Blueberry | <i>Vaccinium</i> sp. |

Birds

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Black Duck | <i>Anas rubripes</i> |
| Herring Gull | <i>Larus argentatus</i> |
| Black-capped Chickadee | <i>Parus atricapillus</i> |
| Common Grackle | <i>Quiscalus quiscula</i> |
| White-winged Crossbill | <i>Loxia leucoptera</i> |

Mammals

| | |
|----------------|--------------------------------|
| Eastern Coyote | <i>Canis latrans</i> (scat?) |
| Snow-shoe Hare | <i>Lepus americanus</i> (scat) |



ADMIRAL'S COVE PARK

Date: Sunday, 23 April

Place: Admiral's Cove Park, Bedford

Region: 413a: Quartzite Barrens; Halifax

Weather: 25°C, sunny and clear

Participants: 12

Interpreter: Patricia Leader

With the thermometer at a barmy 25°C in late April, 12 people set off to explore a little known woodland gem at the far or northern edge of the Bedford Basin – unknown perhaps to most people unless you own a dog or a mountain bike; prefer to rappel down from the cliff face; or in the last few years, have acquired a Global Positioning System. For some years, the recreation department has been running an introductory one-day clinic on rock climbing and rappelling from Eagle's Nest, a rocky outcrop that marks the top edge of Admiral's Cove Park. 'Geo-caching' enthusiasts aren't necessarily looking for foot and handholds but rather some crevice where like-minded devotees have cached a box with notables like plastic toys, souvenir buttons, and a sign-in book. The GSP leads them to within three metres of the cache's location and then, having signed in and perhaps exchanged some trinkets, it's time to move on to another cache. The coordinates of each cache can be copied from a web page which specifies the areas one wants to explore.

Admiral's Cove Park consists of 90 acres of relatively untouched woodland which tumbles from Eagle's Nest down to a series of small beaches along the Bedford Basin. Halfway down is another rocky ridge which offers spectacular views of the Basin, including the western and northern shores of Bedford, the eastern shores of Dartmouth, and south to beyond the MacKay bridge. If one is leaving Halifax and driving along the Bedford Highway, the property and Admiral's Cove land is the last remaining woodland area on the Bedford Basin. Two years ago, Bedford boasted a similar area on the western side of the Basin but rapid development has resulted in concrete grey instead of emerald green as the colour of choice.

Admiral's Cove Park can be accessed from two points; from Snowy Owl Drive in Eaglewood subdivision off the Dartmouth Road, (Route 7), or from near the end of Shore Drive on the eastern side of Bedford Basin. There are a series of trails once one ventures beyond the official signboard on Shore Drive. Going slightly left then on an ascending path which eventually veers left, then up again, one can eventually reach the Eagle's Nest area where a graffiti aficionado has decorated a large rock with the Canadian flag emblem. An alternative path can be accessed by turning right after the

