

Volume IX - August 2014

The Monarchs are Back!

After being observed in very low numbers in Nova Scotia in 2013, monarch butterflies have returned to the province for the summer! Monarchs have had to face severe weather, and loss of habitat along their migration from Mexico to Canada, which is why the Butterfly Club was created. The objective of the Butterfly Club is to help create new habitat for the monarchs by planting swamp milkweed and encouraging pesticide free properties.



Photo by Wesley Pitts

Milkweed is a necessity for the monarch butterflies. It is the only plant that they can lay their eggs on and that the caterpillars can feed on. In other words, no milkweed means no monarchs. Both common and swamp milkweed are suitable for the butterflies, but swamp milkweed will not spread like common milkweed will. Instead, it will bulk up, providing even more habitat over time. It is a great addition to any garden!



Photo by Wesley Pitts

Butterfly Club kits are only \$10.00, and include gardening information, butterfly information, a membership card, and two milkweed plants. All you have to do is plant them in a spot that gets some morning sun, and keep them well watered! Butterfly gardens are a great way to get involved in backyard conservation, kids to see the lifecycle of a butterfly up close!

Please contact MTRI at 1-902-682-2371 or message the Butterfly Club on the facebook page (www.facebook.com/MonarchButterflyClub) if you are interested in joining, or need more information!

Blanding's Turtle Nesting

Every spring, volunteers dedicate countless hours to protecting endangered Blanding's turtle nests in and around Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site. This year, over 75 volunteers helped protect 43 nests in Nova Scotia! Volunteers were excited this year when three young females were observed nesting for the very first time, two of which had their nests protected! Also, the nesting site of a known nesting turtle was found for the first time thanks to a radio that was attached to the turtles shell last spring, allowing volunteers to find the turtle late at night while she was nesting.

A big thank you to all volunteers who faced the rain, bugs and late nights in order to help the Blanding's turtle! We hope to see you all again next spring!



Photo by Wesley Pitts



Photo by Wesley Pitts



Photo by Wesley Pitts

Mersey Messages, Volume IX - August 2014

Calling All Birders!

MTRI is partnering with Dalhousie University to track down six landbird species at risk: the Common Nighthawk, Chimney Swift, Rusty Blackbird, Canada Warbler, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and Eastern Wood-pewee. Clara Ferrari and Laura Achenbach have been doing fieldwork in Southwest Nova Scotia between April and June, trying to find more sightings of these elusive birds. One productive field excursion included surveying land belonging to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, where we had lunch with an Olive-sided Flycatcher and found a nest of baby Rusty Blackbirds! At the end of June we took on the 60 km loop around Kejimikujik National Park, where we wandered through bogs, floodplains, and hemlock forests. Overall, however, we didn't find nearly as many birds as we expected. And that's where you come in!



Laura Achenbach



Clara Ferrari

We need your help collecting sightings of these species so we can monitor their populations, and so Clara can refine models that predict where good habitats for each bird can be found. If you've seen one of these birds, please let us know! If you can, we'd like to know the date, time, and coordinates where you found it (though a civic address or a detailed description also works). To get more information on these species or report a sighting, contact landbirdSAR@merseytobeatic.ca or call MTRI at (902) 682 2371.

Happy birding!



Clara Ferrari

What's happening in the woodlot?

The MTRI Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification group had its 4th annual audit in May. Daniel Martin, auditor with SAI Global, spent two days in SW Nova Scotia meeting some pool members and discussing the program with them. These third-party audits help MTRI and the Federation of Nova Scotia Woodland Owners to continually improve their service and contribute to improved forest management and healthier woodlots.

MTRI also hosted a seminar and field day in Annapolis County this spring; participants got to see how management plans can help guide harvests, road planning and building, whilst incorporating wildlife and recreational values.

MTRI is partnering with the Nova Scotia Woodland Owners and Operators and the Federation of Nova Scotia Woodland Owners on a "mentorship program", encouraging seasoned woodlot owners to share their knowledge with those with less experience by way of hands-on workshops linked to DNR's Woodlot Management Home Study Series.

Keep an eye on MTRI's website and Facebook page for details of woodland workshops in the fall!

Researchers Getting a “Leg” Up on Loons!

Last year the loon project took an exciting new turn looking at adult loon survivorship and site fidelity! Although territorial pairs, nests and chicks are still being monitored, this year the project again focused on locating previously banded loons in Kejimikujik and surrounding area. Loons were banded during the years of 1995-1997 and 2009-2012. Each adult loon received two coloured leg bands on each leg so that each loon (banded as an adult) has a different colour combination and can be positively identified if both legs are seen. Eleven juvenile birds were also banded between 2009-2012; four receiving all four bands, and seven only receiving one silver band on the left leg due to their small size when banding occurred.

Using spotting scopes the MTRI loon crew has already confirmed 20 loons banded as adults between 2009-2012. In addition, they have also spotted one of the seven young juveniles banded in 2010 that received only a silver band on the left leg. So far this year no loons banded between 1995-1997 have been sighted; however time remains, and the loon crew is still hopeful.

If you spot a loon with leg bands please contact Colin (colin.gray@merseytobeatic.ca) or Alicia (alicia.pray-leslie@merseytobeatic.ca) at MTRI!



Photo by Colin Gray



Photo by Colin Gray



Photo by Colin Gray

Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora!

Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora (ACPF) are a unique group of unrelated and often rare plants that are mainly restricted to the flat land along the Atlantic Coast, from Florida to Nova Scotia, called the Atlantic coastal plain. Here in Nova Scotia, they are concentrated in the southwest, mainly along inland lakes, rivers, wetlands, and along the seacoast in salt marshes.

In 2010, guided by the ACPF Recovery Team and Recovery Strategy, MTRI began a five-year project designed to promote stewardship, increase our scientific understanding, and offer educational opportunities about these species. The project targets 36 lakes and since 2010 each lake has been visited for one aspect of the project or another. There was little field work for the project in 2013 but this year we plan to work hard and finish many aspects of the project earlier than expected!

Atlantic Coastal Plain Flora! (Continued)

Staff and volunteers collect water quality data, conduct plant inventories, measure habitat and photo-map lakeshores. Plant inventories have occurred on over 550km of shore and over 350km of shore has been classified for habitat characteristics and habitat quality. All of this feeds into an interactive online atlas of sensitive areas on ACPF lakes. Volunteers are welcome to come help with any part of the project that interests them.

The MTRI team has chatted with hundreds of owners on many lakes, over 60 volunteers have contributed to the more than 1700 hours of volunteer time to the project. The efforts of volunteers and communities are essential to this project and to the health of watersheds, shorelines and ACPF species, especially given the fact that 13 of these are listed under the Species at Risk Act and/or NS Endangered Species Act and found nowhere else in Canada! If you would like to get involved in the project contact: info@merseytobeatic.ca or call 902-682-2371.



Photo by Alain Belliveau



Photo by Alain Belliveau



Photo by Alain Belliveau

New Horizons Training Session

On Tuesday, July 15th MTRI hosted a training session for seniors who have volunteered as interviewers in the Seniors Interviewing Seniors: Valuing and Sharing Rural Narratives, project. Eight seniors from Queens County and western Annapolis County participated in the half-day training.

The session began with Amanda Lavers, Executive Director of MTRI, giving an overview of MTRI's various initiatives and projects.

Following that, Carla Malay, Senior Friendly Program presenter, and Suzanne Baker, Falls Prevention Coordinator for South Shore Health, provided the participants with a comprehensive look at the ageing process and how interviewers can be aware of those challenges.

RCMP officer Laura Cormier attended and aided the process of completing vulnerable sector checks.

Joyce Grant-Smith, New Horizons coordinator, lead the group through the interview process. They discussed the questions to be covered and record keeping. Participants practised with the digital cameras and recorders that will be used during interviews.



The New Horizons Project, Seniors Interviewing Seniors, is well on its way!

Geocaching!

Are you geocacher or are you interested in partaking in this growing hobby? As part of MTRI's 10 events to celebrate its 10 year anniversary, a geocache set of 10 caches has been developed and put in place throughout Annapolis, Queens and Lunenburg counties. Each cache has been placed at a location where ongoing research work is taking place. The cache itself contains an information card that will provide finders with information on the project. It is our hope that this set of geocaches will allow individuals, both new and old to MTRI, to learn about the work that we do in an interactive way.

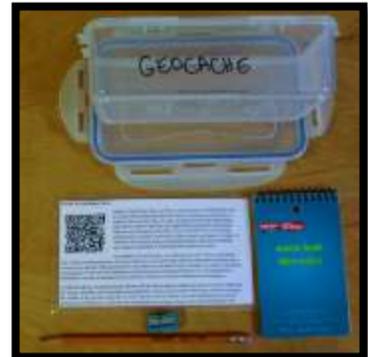


Photo by Sarah Adams

Geocaching is part of a worldwide game dedicated to GPS (Global Positioning System) users. This game involves a GPS user hiding "treasure" (typically a container with contents), and publishing the exact coordinates online on a geocaching website so that other geocachers can then go a treasure hunt to find the cache. The only rules to the game are: if you take something from the cache, you must leave something for the cache, and you must write about your visit in the logbook. In turn, geocaches are placed where they do not harm the surrounding environment or trespass on private property.

If you are lucky, you might see MTRI researchers in the area doing work while you are at a cache site! Some caches will be easier to access than others, with the most remote cache being placed this fall at the soon to be rebuilt Cofan Cabin in the Tobeatic Wilderness area. Two of the geocaches are in Kejimikujik National Park and Historic Site, one in the front country and the other in the back country. Of the ten caches, eight can be accessed with relative ease, being within a short walking distance of a road way. The cache in the Tobeatic and the cache in the Kejimikujik backcountry will require a longer and more planned out approach to be able to get in and locate them! The coordinates for each cache can be found by going to the Play tab on geocaching.com and searching 'Hidden By Username' **MerseyTobeatic** under the hide and seek a cache link. Go to the MTRI Facebook Page www.facebook.ca/merseytobeatic or our website www.merseytobeatic.ca for more information!

MTRI Seniors' Seminar

The MTRI meeting room was filled as the Seniors' Seminar, a presentation designed for participants over the age of 50, got underway at 4:00 on July 17th. Over 20 seniors from the area came to learn about MTRI's projects and initiatives.

Seniors heard about the goals of the New Horizons Project, Seniors Interviewing Seniors, from coordinator Joyce Grant-Smith.

Then they watched a slide presentation of native land birds presented by Laura Auchenbach. The seniors were enthralled as they listened to recordings of bird songs.

Camille Tedesco showed a short video about loons, which was well received. It prompted several comments and questions about these iconic birds.

Mersey Messages, Volume IX - August 2014

MTRI Seniors' Seminar (Continued)

Wesley Pitts and Travis Landry gave a demonstration and talk about Blanding's turtles. They explained trapping and nest protection. This provided an opportunity for the audience to ask questions and share stories about these endangered turtles.

Then Brad Tom gave a slide presentation about monarch butterflies and the milkweed plants that are necessary for their survival.

Amanda Lavers, Executive Director of MTRI, finished the afternoon's presentations with a slide show demonstrating green energy being used at MTRI. The goal, she said, is to eventually be carbon neutral using energy saving practices as well as geothermal, solar and wind power.

Delicious refreshments were served following the presentations and everyone had an opportunity to chat and discuss the work being done at MTRI. It was a very enjoyable and informative afternoon.



Photo by Wesley Pitts

Membership Drive



This year marks the tenth anniversary for MTRI. To celebrate, we've advertised ten great ways to get involved, and at the top of the list is becoming a member of MTRI.

If you are getting your own copy of this newsletter, it's likely because you are already a member. Can you help us recruit 100 new members this summer by recommending us to your friends and family? There is no cost involved and membership terms are for 5 years. Signing up is as easy as calling or emailing us or filling out the little purple box on the right side of our webpage.