

DRUMLIN TRAIL WALK

- by Bernie McKenna

- photos by Louise Grinstead

Date: Saturday, May 24th

Place: Uniacke Estate Provincial Park

Weather: 9C, overcast

Participants: 9

This walk was initially slated for May, 10th; however, wet weather, Mother's Day weekend and the Victoria Day long weekend, delayed it until the 24th. The Drumlin Trail is 2.1 Kms long and is bordered on the right by the 97-acre, Uniacke Lake and on the left by a well wooded area. The trail has a solid walking surface, and other than tree roots, was pretty easy going. This write-up



is in three legs, Leg 1: The walk from the parking lot to the 2nd leg trail head. Leg 2: The section along the lake shore to the turning point. Leg 3: The final leg to the Drumlin crest and down to the Drumlin base.

I want to mention here that this walk was loosely led by the committee, this often works surprisingly well, especially in smaller groups, and makes for much more group participation. I also have to mention that the Merlin and Seek apps were used throughout to identify or confirm the identity of specific species. One of the walkers gave me my first introduction to the Seek app, which I found to be excellent, its rapid, responsive, decisive and easy to use.

Leg 1

After introductions and a brief chat, we were off, headed down the main access road to the lake and the 2nd leg start. Going down the road the estate home with its expansive lawn was on our right. The lawn close to the house has a scattering of mature Red Maples, Green Ash and English Oaks. The lawn transitioned into a large open field that extended to the base of the field and the lake. The field was covered in Canada Mayflowers, Partridgeberry and Low Bush Blueberries. The blueberries were so thick that the whole field had a reddish, brown hue when viewed from a distance. Further down also on the right were a line of younger English Oak and Green Ash, all just coming in to leaf. Along the left of the road, it was fully wooded, with a number of large, 5 needled White

Pine, Eastern Hemlock and our provincial tree, the Red Spruce. Amongst the non-coniferous trees, we saw White Birch, a Large Toothed Aspen, Yellow Birch and many shrubs and smaller plants. These included Rhodoras, in full bloom, Black Cherry, Smooth and Speckled Alders (the Seek app decided which was which here) Wild Raisin, and a row of blueberries extending the whole way to the bottom of the field.

Since it was a somewhat cool, overcast day, bees were scarce on the blueberry blossoms. Any stumps we saw were covered in lichens and mosses, all of which were converting the stump into nutrients and soil. At the turning point towards the lake there were several large Eastern White Cedars, which were obviously enjoying their wet location.



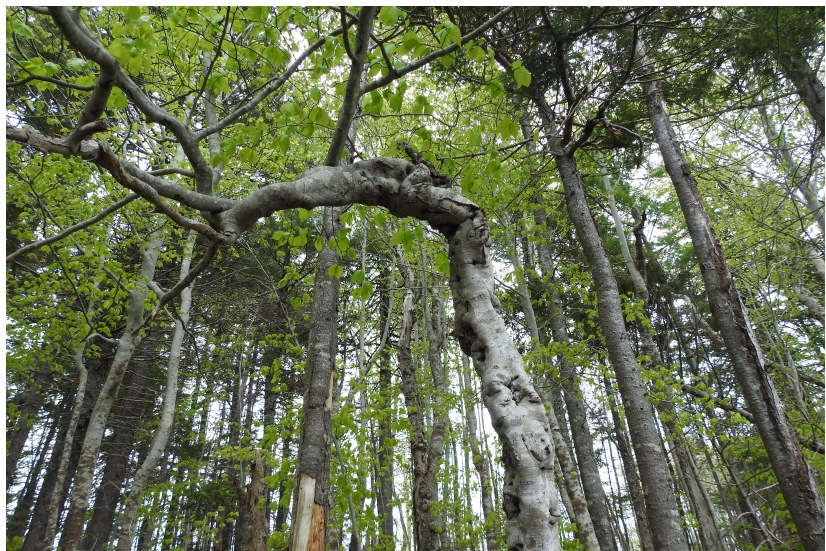
White Pine - *Pinus strobus*

Leg 2

At the start of the 2nd leg, we crossed over a small wooden, foot bridge that spanned a small watercourse, lined with ferns and mosses on both banks. The view and the pleasant sound of the water made it easy to stop for a minute! The lake on the right is stocked with Brook Trout, or at least used to be. Regardless, it does hold Largemouth and Smallmouth Bass, American Eels, White Suckers and Yellow Perch, and no doubt several species of minnows. I'm told the lake is a popular fishing location for family outings.

The whole 2nd leg along the lake shore had large coniferous trees leaning well out over the water's edge. On the left in this section, there was a good mix of both conifers and non-conifers. Along with the above, mentioned trees, we saw Large Yellow Birch, Red Maples, a few White Birch, and American Beech.

Several of the latter were infected with Beech Bark Disease, which causes cankers, deformity and eventual death. It's caused by a non-native insect, the beech scale that penetrates the bark to feed on the tree's juices. This opening allows a fungus to enter and infect the tree, which eventually leads to the death of the tree. This disease is particularly impactful as it can kill large trees, impacting forest structure and wildlife habitat.



American Beech - *Fagus grandifolia*
(showing effects of Beech Bark Disease)



Painted Trillium - *Trillium undulatum*

Along this stretch was a large, uprooted root ball from a past storm, unlike most similar root balls, this one held virtually no soil. No doubt the ravages of time had cleaned it off. That covers the large trees in this section. On the smaller side we found a wealth of varieties; Canada Mayflower, Partridgeberry, Bunchberry, Wintergreen, Three-leaf Goldthread, Mountain Holly, Spotted Hawkweed, Trailing Arbutus, Blue-bead Lily, Three-leaved Rattlesnake Root and Sarsaparilla. Continuing the list, we

found, Bracken Fern, Interrupted Ferns, Evergreen Ferns and a wide variety of mosses and lichens. In flower we had Painted Trilliums, Serviceberry and Hobblebush, the latter with its typical viburnum flat flower pattern.

Leg 3

This leg brought us to an upward turn and headed back towards the Drumlin crest and the downward walk to the parking area. This leg was generally more open with smaller trees taking advantage of the increase sunlight and thinner canopy overhead. A number of large conifers had snapped off part way up the trunk, leaving these canopy openings. Both Yellow and White Birch were here, with some of the yellow being very large. Here the Merlin app, really came into its own, identifying feathered singers that were heard but not seen. Here again, any stumps were fully enclosed in colourful, lichens and mosses, one even had a small hemlock growing on it. This more open area was also to the liking of Partridgeberry and Wintergreen, and they stretched across the trail with ease.



This leg led us over many roots as we crested the Drumlin and came out into an open field with its wonderful, commanding view of the estate house, the lake and its beautiful grounds. I am sure it must have been a very favourite spot of Richard John Uniacke himself to look over and admire his property. The crest has two very old and large trees, one is a truly immense Yellow



Birch and the other, an equally old English Oak, with some of its branches reaching out almost horizontally to the ground. At their bases were smaller English Oaks, a Green Ash and a Red Spruce. The field is kept mowed, and again had Low Bush Blueberries, a mix of wild flowers and a small clump of Small Pussytoes. Later in the year the hillside is

Small Pussytoes - *Antennaria parvifolia*

bathed in flowers and the attendant bees can be heard at some distance. Heading down the hill we came to a large, mystery tree, Seek identified it as a Green Ash, but once it called it a European Ash, who knows?

This about finished our walk, from here it was back to the cars where 4 of us departed but the other 5 stayed for a snack, and a walk on another trail. The Uniacke Estate Provincial Park has 8 walking trails, of varying difficulty and length. For anyone interested, I think you'd find the park and its trails well worth a visit.