

Walk Report: Graves Island (4 April 2026)

Walk Leader Gareth Harding

- *Report and Photos by Pooja Vijayaraj*

Graves Island, connected to the mainland by a causeway, offered views of Mahone Bay on a windy day. We completed a loop along the coastal trail, enjoying the natural scenery and observing the island's rich history.



Along the trail, placards shaped like light bulbs were fastened to trees, detailing the history of the island and its early settlers. Graves Island officially opened in 1971, initially offering 52 campsites; it now has 95 campsites and one group site. Noah and Eunice Graves lived on the island from around 1900 to 1940 with their two daughters. Eunice ran Camp Sunshine, a summer camp for underprivileged or orphaned children, while Noah maintained about a dozen cows that supplied milk for a family-run creamery during the 1930s.

The trail showcased a variety of interesting flora and fauna. We observed a dead tree with extensive burl formations (rounded swellings possibly caused by stress or injury), giving it a sculptural appearance, as well as trees affected by black knot fungus, which caused black, swollen, and cracked growths.



In some areas, multiple slender trunks arose from what appeared to be a single base, representing root suckers from long-gone parent trees.



A small evergreen growing atop a moss-covered boulder demonstrated the resilience of trees, anchoring its roots in thin soil layers and rock cracks.



We also noticed dried apple trees, likely of European origin, known for their sweetness and marking early settlement history.

Other plant life included haircap moss, beard lichens, trailing arbutus, and balsam fir. Along the shore, bladderwrack seaweed was covered with tiny organisms, possibly baby barnacles, while knotted wrack was also present.



Wildlife observations included red-breasted nuthatch, mallards, and red squirrels, which happily ate sunflower seeds provided for the chickadees. Members enjoyed feeding the chickadees as they walked along the trail, observing both the wildlife and the remarkable adaptations of the island's trees and plants

