

MEADOW POND TRAIL WALK

- by Bernie McKenna

Date: Saturday, April 25

Place: Meadow Pond Trail, West Hants

Weather: 7 C, intermittent cloud and sun

Participants: 6

This walk was a very pleasant and welcome surprise for us at the conclusion of the Landfill Reclamation Walk. Pat Kelly from the Federation of Nova Scotia Naturalists (FNSN) had joined us on the Landfill Walk and the subsequent Glooscap Heritage Trail Loop, after which he invited us to join him on a short hike to the nearby Meadow Ponds. Unfortunately, most of our group had already left and were not aware of Pat's generous offer. The ponds are reached by a 1,591-foot double track trail, with a firm gravel walking base. At the ponds themselves this narrows to a single track with spots that may be muddy, wet or both. The parking area is just off of Hwy 14 at exit 5 of Hwy 101. During the walk in, he showed us sink holes of differing sizes and explained how the gypsum base accounts for the large number of them.

Pat explained the ponds are the result of a closed, open pit gypsum quarry which is now fully flooded. Its maximum depth is listed as 60 feet by one source, however that couldn't be confirmed on the Nova Scotia Government site. He did tell us that the drop-off is quite steep and goes from shallow to depth quickly.

The pond is surrounded by bulrushes and treed vegetation, and had at least one beaver lodge along the far shore, both recent and older beaver workings and feeding stations were plentiful. Major trees included, Red Oak, White Spruce, White Pine, Yellow Birch, Tamarack and American Beech, the beech were just starting to bud out. On the smaller side were Sphagnum mosses, Labrador tea, cranberry, cotton grass and a variety of small shrubs existing in clumps on the gypsum base. 4 interesting items we did see were, a single Daphne shrub in full bloom, another was Water lobelia, standing 6 to 8 inches above the water surface, but not yet flowering. Another 2 were Sunburst lichen and a bearded lichen of unknown species attached to a small, dead branch.



Bird life was scarce and we only saw Mallard and Black Ducks and male Red-winged blackbirds guarding their territories.

This walk was a totally unexpected treat to an area I have often wondered about when driving by. We all thanked Pat for this addition to the day and his knowledge of the area and the ponds themselves.