

Prospect Trail Walk - *by Pooja Vijayaraj*

Date: Sunday, June 14

Place: Prospect High Head Trail

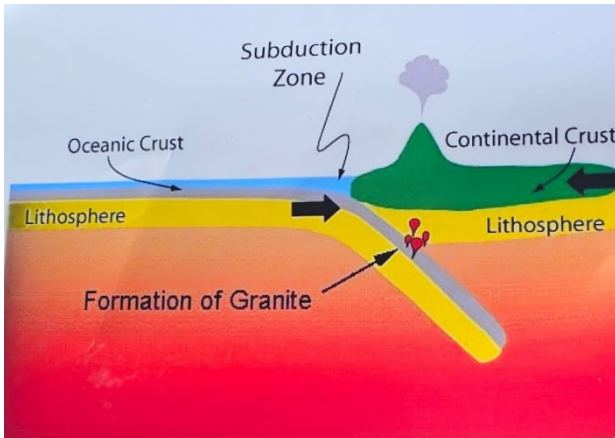
Weather: 14 C, overcast breaking to sunshine

Participants: 13

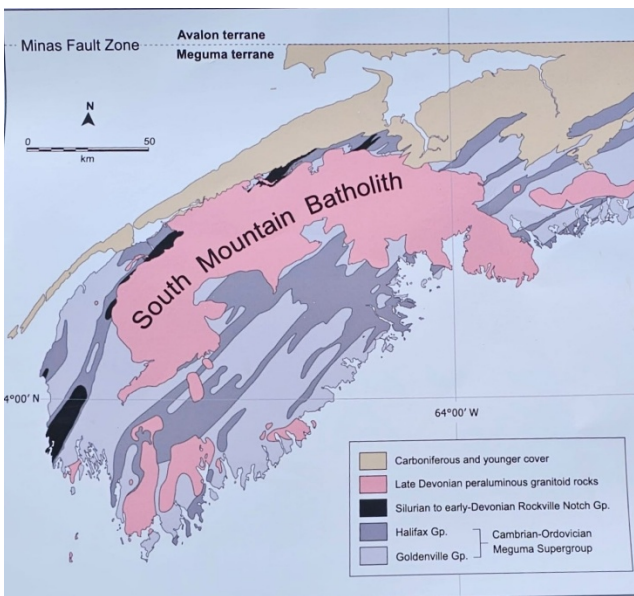


Halifax Field Naturalists member Graeme Coxon led us on a walk along the High Head Trail in the Bill Freedman Nature Reserve, Prospect, on June 14, 2026. One of the reserve's most striking features is its extensive exposed granite outcrops. The trail winds through coastal forest before emerging onto broad granite bedrock, offering spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean.





During the walk, Graeme explained how granite forms. When an oceanic tectonic plate is forced beneath a continental plate (a process called subduction), it sinks into the hot mantle and partially melts, producing magma. This magma rises through the continental crust and cools slowly deep underground, where it solidifies to form granite. In some cases, magma also feeds volcanoes on the surface.



Graeme presented a geological map of the South Mountain Batholith, a vast granite body that formed during the Late Devonian period as magma cooled beneath the Earth's surface. He explained that this granite formation underlies much of southern Nova Scotia and was created during the continental collisions associated with the formation of Pangaea. The map also highlighted major fault zones, surrounding rock formations, and the region's complex geological history.



He also shared a reconstruction of the continents around the Atlantic Ocean, illustrating that they were once together. The map showed that the Appalachian Mountains in North America and the Caledonian Mountains in Greenland, the British Isles, and Scandinavia were once part of the same continuous mountain range before continental drift separated them.

Participants learned about Double-crested Cormorant, whose reduced feather oil allows deeper diving but requires them to dry their wings after swimming. The discussion also covered gypsum deposits, their role in forming karst landscapes and sinkholes, local vegetation such as black crowberry, and the area's popularity for recreational fishing, with pollock observed being caught during the visit.

Species Observed

The High Head Trail passes through a variety of coastal, forest, and wetland habitats, supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and plants. During the walk, participants identified the following species:

Birds: Double-crested Cormorant, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Herring Gull, American Crow.

Trees: White Birch, White Spruce, Black Spruce, Balsam Fir, Common Juniper, Alder.

Berry Plants: Black Crowberry, Black Chokeberry, Wild Raisin, Black Huckleberry, Serviceberry, Lowbush Blueberry, Wintergreen (Teaberry), Bunchberry, Bog Cranberry, Raspberry, Bayberry, and Gooseberry.

Other Plants: Wild Rose, Nodding Trillium, Northern Pitcher Plant, Wild Iris, Bog Laurel, Cotton Grass, Mountain Fly Honeysuckle, Common Yarrow, Canada Mayflower, Beach Pea (Sea Pea), Red Clover, Labrador Tea, Northern Starflower, Common Silverweed and Sarsaparilla.



Wild Iris in bloom



Northern Pitcher Plant

Ferns: Cinnamon Fern, Interrupted Fern, and Bracken.



Cinnamon Fern



The trail also includes uneven granite terrain with small, hard-to-see wet depressions and water-filled hollows. These likely represent shallow bog pools or seepage areas formed where water collects in low points over bedrock rather than large, clearly defined ponds.



Weathered remains of trees

Many thanks to Graeme Coxon for leading this informative and engaging field walk. His knowledge of the geology, ecology, and natural history of the Prospect area greatly enriched the experience and helped participants gain a deeper appreciation of the landscape.