

SHANNON PARK NATURE WALK

- Bernie McKenna, Grace Beazley
(photos by Gillian Webster)

Date: Saturday, August 15, 2026

Place: Shannon Park Canada 150 Trail

Weather: Sunny, 26°C

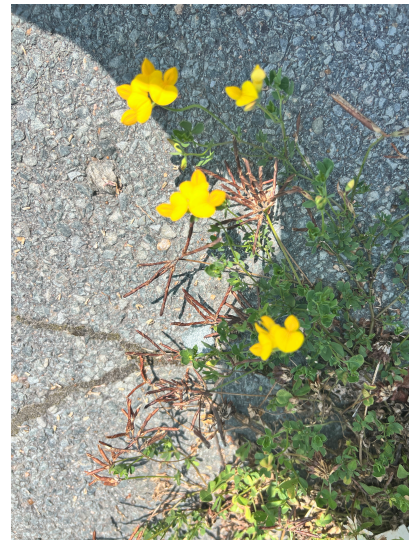
Participants: 15 with leader included

This walk was very well attended, as a 'Clarence -Stevens-led-walk' typically is. After all-round introductions, Clarence was introduced and the walk was turned over to him. He got things underway with an important and timely announcement emphasizing the extremely high concentration of Lyme-bearing Black Legged Ticks in the area.

The outing had two segments that took full advantage of two distinct environments. The first was the area surrounding **Shannon Park Elementary School**, while the second was the **Shannon Park Canada 150 Trail**, located in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and established on the former military lands by the property company, Canada Lands Company. The trail was officially opened on November 18, 2017; its official name is the **Canada 150 Trail and Lookout**, and it is often referred to simply as the **Canada 150 Trail**.

First Segment

This segment included the area from the parking lot to a full circle of the school grounds. The mowed area was lawn height while the fringes were a mix of any number of low shrubs and other vegetation. Even in the parking lot margins, Clarence pointed out plants and detailed different points about them. The first plant was the non-native Birds-foot trefoil, brought to Nova Scotia by early settlers as animal forage and no doubt named for the resemblance of its ripened seed pods to a bird's talons or toes. A valued feature of the plant is its ability to lessen soil erosion and affix nitrogen in the soil.



Bird's-foot trefoil
Lotus corniculatus

Another plentiful plant was Black Knapweed, the most common of the 3 species in the province. This plant resemble thistles minus the sharp spines or prickles. A third plant along here was perennial yarrow, another very common plant in Nova Scotia. Among other things, it is valued for the ability of its leaves to stem bleeding from cuts and scrapes. All this and we hadn't left the sidewalk yet! This same attention to plant details and usage applied to practically all the many plants we came across.

The plants in this segment of the walk included Birds-foot trefoil, Buffalo Berry (soap berry), Autumn olive, Timothy grass, Queen Anne's lace, Red-seeded dandelion, Autumn hawkbit, Eye-bright, Pineappleweed, Broadleaf plantain, yarrow, tansy, wild mustard, dandelion, goldenrod (of 18 species we saw 4), bayberry, and ragweed (3 species in province). We also saw a row of several ash trees that appeared to be dead or dying from some disease or insect damage.



Goldenrod *Genus Solidago* (upper left)
 Queen Anne's Lace *Daucus carota* (upper right)
 Black Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* (foreground)



Queen Anne's Lace *Daucus carota*



Hawkbit
Genus Leontodon

These were most of the plant species seen and discussed in this segment, several of them were seen again in the second part of the walk on the trail proper. Other than time restraints, Clarence could have expanded his information on most of all these plants.

Second Segment

This segment of the Shannon Park Nature Walk took place on the trail itself, the **Canada 150 Trail and Lookout**. It closes in October and opens again in May of the following year. Actual dates may vary depending on local conditions at the time. This is a 1.4 km (0.9 mi) partial loop walk that includes a large lookout platform allowing an excellent view of the Halifax Harbour, Bedford Basin, and the MacKay Bridge.

It was a more wooded area with much appreciated shady spots. The trailhead to the start of the loop is a fairly open area on the left with full grown oaks, maples and ash. While on the right, there were many of the plants associated with this type of terrain, and it also included a number of the ones seen in first segment. The plants along here included Common Hawthorn, Round-leaf hawthorn, Mountain-ash, Multiflora rose, Virginia rose, both Red and White sweet clover, and bayberry. Coming across Giant goldenrod, Clarence took time to point out its identification features and how it is the tallest goldenrod in the province.



Multiflora rose
Rosa multiflora

Taking the right side of the loop section we were immediately into a denser-wooded area of likely second-growth trees and shrubs. We found Northern red oak, Red maple, White birch, Trembling aspen, a number of wild apple trees, and a scattering of softwoods and understory. Approaching the lookout, we found edible wild blueberry, Black huckleberry, Blackberry and Serviceberry, the latter a bit past their prime, and the others just coming into theirs. We also saw Hobblebush, Sweet fern (a bayberry relative), and sadly, the invasive Japanese knotweed.

On the non-plant ledger, we saw Osprey, Herring gulls, Double-crested cormorants, American goldfinches, White-breasted nuthatches, a Northern flicker, chickadees, and blue jays. The highlight bird of the day and walk was an almost totally leucistic robin. [*For some reader's information:* Such a robin is a rare individual bird with a genetic condition that causes its feathers to grow white, pale, or patchy instead of their usual grey-brown and red.]



Insects encountered included Carolina locusts, Cracker grasshoppers, Cabbage white, Clouded sulphur, and European common blue butterflies. Seeing the European common blue butterflies was another highlight of the day and walk.

One animal of note was a solitary whitetail deer. She was unperturbed by our presence and just walked away at her own pace. Clarence told us that they generally want confirmation of possible danger by a combination of two of three senses, either sound, sight or smell. If a deer is suddenly startled, it will often run a short distance then stop and turn around to confirm its flight.

European common blue butterflies
Polyommatus icarus

This concludes the narrative of a most informative and enjoyable outing. Back at the parking lot, we sincerely thanked Clarence for all his efforts on our behalf before we departed for hopefully a cooler location.

