

SPECTACLE LAKE PROTECTED AREAS WEEK WALK

- Bernie McKenna and Grace Beazley
(photos by Susan Holmes, Paul Philp, and Bernie McKenna)

Date: Tuesday, July 28, 2026

Place: Spectacle Lake Trail

Weather: 19°C increased to 26°C by walk end

Participants: 22, including 5 youth

This walk was the first time HFN'ers had visited the Spectacle Lake area since August of 2023. This time the walk was done in conjunction with the Nature Nova Scotia Protected Areas Week, which ran from July 25 to August 1. This 8-day week was initiated to further stress the necessity of increased protected areas being designated if the province is to reach its own target of protecting at least 20 per cent of the province's total land and water area by the year 2030.

Spectacle Lake is a small lake situated between Dartmouth Crossings and Burnside Industrial Park. Well named, it is shaped very much like a pair of spectacles (or eye glasses) with a narrows between the two lake sections looking much like a nose pad separating two distinct smaller water bodies. The north end is very shallow and on this day was practically covered in fragrant white-water lilies from shore to shore. The south section is much deeper and only has vegetation around the edges or in a few shallow spots. The lake is fed almost entirely by five street storm sewers and one small flow from a sizeable peat bog. The lake outflow drains by Frenchman's Brook into Frenchman's Lake and from there ends up in lake Micmac, which is part of the Shubenacadie Canal System.



Wildlife in this small area is remarkable in abundance and includes Eastern painted and Snapping turtles, as well as bull, green, wood and spring peeper frogs--those actually seen were the bull and green frogs. The lake is always a good birding location, and a couple of dedicated birders identified the following: Black and White Warbler, Yellowthroat Warbler, Yellow Warbler, Red-eyed Vireo,



American Bullfrog
Lithobates catesbeianus

Black-capped Chickadee, American Goldfinch, American Robin, Downy Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Cedar Waxwing, Mallard Duck, American Crow, and three Herring Gulls; and possibly heard but unverified were an American Bittern and Osprey. That's 15 birds verified and a couple maybes. The fish population present includes sticklebacks, introduced smallmouth bass, probably Chain Pickerel, minnows, and eels.



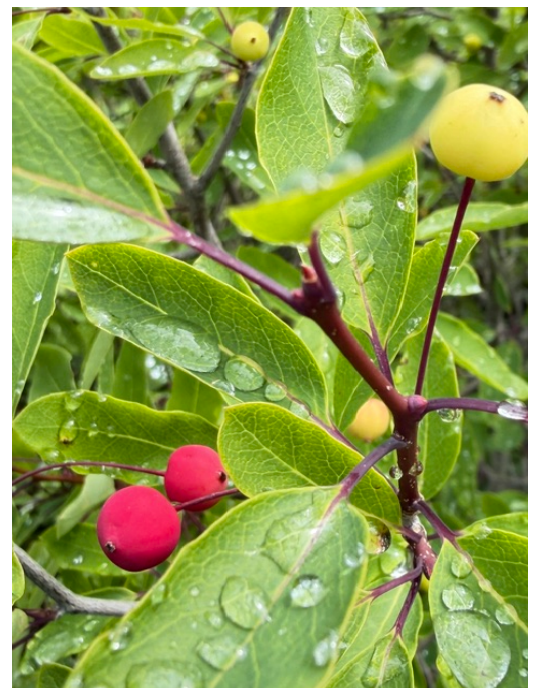
We had an environmentally-conscious group of walkers, and from the trailhead onward we picked up coffee cups, cigarette butts, beverage cans and other discarded items. This eventually amounted to quite a collection by the walk's end.

As we entered the trailhead, we were amongst Northern Red Oak, Red Maples, White Birch and Large Tooth Aspens on both sides of the trail, and not far along were three Witch Hazel shrubs of about 7-8 feet (or ~2.3 meters) in height. This being July, they were well past the flowering stage. This versatile plant has found its way into skin cleansing products and was an original ingredient of a Nova Scotia tick repellent.

Further along there was bracken, Multiflora roses, Canada Mayflowers, Bunchberry, Coltsfoot, and Wintergreen. Descending to the lake level we had another view of the white-water lilies. In the same stretch we found Black-bead lilies, Cinnamon ferns, Speckled alders, Sweet meadow rue, false spirea, Serviceberry, Guelder rose, goldenrod, and wild irises.

The north end of the trail led us through a stand of tall, straight Trembling aspen with a smattering of White birch, the stand density limited any height to the understory plant growth. From here we went down into a wetter spot where there were cattails of 7-8 feet height (or ~2.3 meters), and a small flow pretty much covered in by alders. Past here and a touch drier, we saw Wild raisin, Mountain holly, Bayberry, wild Blueberries, Black huckleberry, Common elderberry, and one wild iris in bloom.

We crossed a deteriorating bridge over the Garland Street sewer outflow which, like the two boardwalks ahead, were each in bad need of repair--broken and missing planking was all too common. Next was the first boardwalk with the



Mountain Holly
Ilex mucronata

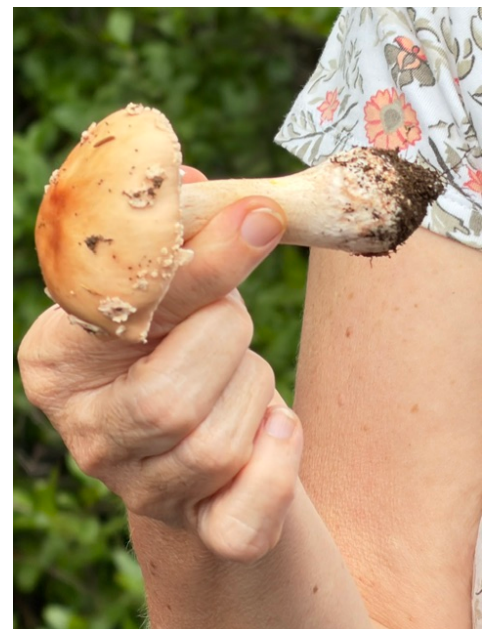
frogs, which like the blueberries was definitely the prime attraction of the youth among us and many adults as well. Along here besides the frogs, we saw Northern pitcher plants, Larch (also frequently called tamarack), and Black spruce, all of which were enjoying the wetter footing here. A short path led us to the opposite side of the northern part of the lake, and gave us another view of the water lilies and a large beaver bank den on the far shore. A second path further on led to the deeper part of the lake where the vegetation only grew along the shore and shallow sections. Out in the middle of the lake an adult Herring Gull with two juvenile or immature gulls were having a quiet family outing.



From here our route took us over the second boardwalk on the lower end of the peat bog which has a solid showing of native rhodora, unfortunately long past its flowering stage. However, when in flower, it is a solid floating sea of rosy-hued purple and violet colours. The trees of consequence here were Larch, White pine, Black spruce, and more Multiflora roses and alders. We then crossed the small flow that drains the peat bog into the shallow part of the lake. With the water course on our left, the whole left side of the trail had Black spruce, Larch, alders, mosses and more cattails; while the right side was up-hill and had the oak and maples one would expect to find.

During the walk we had the good fortune to have Tamara Elwood, a fungi-knowledgeable member, willingly share her knowledge with us. Her coverage of mushrooms and bracket fungus was so thorough, it added immensely to our enjoyment and knowledge base. Every time she detailed the features and hazards of the various species, she had a cluster of interested walkers surrounding her.

That concludes this walk write up. It was especially heartening to see such a good turnout on a summer weekday for this Protected Areas Week Walk. Hopefully this type of event will help emphasize the need for more provincially designated Wildlife Protected Areas.



Amanita Mushrooms
Genus Amanita