



Shield Lichen

Lichen a lot - A lichen is actually a combination of two organisms - a fungus which provides the structure, and an algae which provides food through photosynthesis. Lichens come in three main forms - crust-like, leafy, and shrubby (reindeer lichen) or hanging (beard lichen). They are often slow growing and are indicators of air quality.

Wild about flowers - Flowering plants and shrubs abound along the trail. Just what you will see depends on when and where you look. Many varieties flower in the spring, and bear fruit or berries later in the summer. You may see strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and blueberries.



Bunchberry flowers are actually the tiny yellowish-green structures in the middle, surrounded by four white bracts. As the name suggests, they are replaced by a cluster of red berries.

This European variety of columbine is a garden escapee that has become established in the area. The native wild variety has yellow flowers. Both bloom in early summer.



Wintergreen is an evergreen plant with bright, shiny leaves. It is often called teaberry, and has white, bell-shaped flowers followed by red berries. Both the leaves and berries have a wintergreen flavour.



This red clover is the home address for a leafhopper. The little white insect has also earned the name spittlebug because it creates a frothy spit-like covering to camouflage and protect itself.

Enjoy the many varieties of plants on your woodland walk. - the yellow nodding flowers of Clintonia or bluebead lily, sheep laurel, blue-eyed grass, and daisies. Be sure to stop and smell them!



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Carroll's Corner, Nova Scotia

The **Mastodon Walking Trail** originates behind the Carroll's Corner Community Centre, and in its final stage will connect with the community of Dutch Settlement. This community trail is open to all non-motorized traffic, so you are welcome to walk, cycle or 'hoof' your way along the trail! Please observe trail etiquette and bring out anything you carry in. Further suggestions for enjoying a safe, green outing are on the Nova Scotia Trails Federation website at www.novascotiatrails.com



Blue flag iris grow in wet areas

The trail has so much to offer ... it's a great location for an invigorating jog or bike ride, or a more leisurely amble in the fresh air enjoying what nature has to offer. Regardless of your use, slow down every so often and use your senses to explore the sights, scents and sounds of the wooded trail - these can change throughout the day and the seasons.

Step back in time - The story begins 345 million years ago, in a place not so far away ... a warm inland sea resulted in the formation of a whitish mineral called gypsum. Over time, the soft gypsum was worn away by water, which often created sinkholes which can fill with water forming deep ponds. The shape of the land changed over time due to erosion, and the bulldozing action of huge mountains of ice called glaciers. During these cooler times, creatures resembling furry elephants called mastodons roamed the area. Around 80,000 years ago, a young adult mastodon got stuck in the mud of a sinkhole pond, broke its leg, and died.



Fast forward to October 1991 - Then as now, the National Gypsum Canada operated the largest gypsum quarry in the world, located Carroll's Corner. Gypsum is used to make wallboard, and used in many other products such as bread and toothpaste!



Model of 'Stanley' at Mastodon Ridge, Stewiacke, NS

Quarry worker, Stanley McMullin, discovered bones while excavating a clay-filled sinkhole. Over the following year, Nova Scotia Museum staff members, Bob Grantham and Kelly Gittis, and many dedicated volunteers, excavated the remains of the 22 year old mastodon. The sinkhole was also a time capsule for other organisms, including trees, snails, frogs, turtles, snakes, fish, birds, and even a caribou tooth.

Along trail, there are several large boulders which were plucked from bedrock and moved by the glacier - these worn boulders are known as glacial erratics. These grey boulders started as sand 550 million years ago, which was compressed into sandstone, and then 'cooked' to form the metamorphic rock, quartzite. Quartzite is widely used as gravel in NS.



Quartzite boulder is a glacial erratic

It's a Wildlife - You may not see them now ... some wildlife are shy and elusive, others are nocturnal, and some sleep during the winter or migrate. But there are signs of wildlife along the trail - look for tracks, scat (droppings), and browse. And if you're quiet, you may hear a call or catch a glimpse of some wild neighbours. Be prepared to do a little TSI ... Trail Side Investigation. Scat can provide info on the critter's last meal. That pile, or midden, of cone scales is a favorite dining spot for a red squirrel.

Is that a broken twig? Or does it have a curled bit of bark on top ... a sign that white-tailed deer nibbled the branch. Deer only have front teeth on their lower jaw and often leave behind a telltale strip of bark on top of the hardwood twig.

Look closely and you may see signs of mammals such as porcupine, skunks, raccoons, squirrels, chipmunks, hare, deer or coyotes. Moist areas are likely spots to look for amphibians like salamanders and frogs, while snakes may be spotted sunning themselves. Watch and listen for birds, such as rosebreasted grosbeaks.

Owls are a real hoot - beneath their roosting spots, you may find the pellets they 'cough up' containing undigested bones, fur or feathers from their last meal! Barred owls are most common, so you may hear their call, 'Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?'. Keep your eyes skyward and you may see other raptors including bald eagles, and our provincial bird, the osprey.

This tell tale rectangular hole was made by a pileated woodpecker looking for insects - you'd recognize this red-crested bird as the cartoon character, Woody Woodpecker. These holes are often found in dead standing trees called snags, which are important homes for other birds.



Branching out - Its easy to spot the evergreens or 'coniferous' trees ... here are some tips for telling these softwoods apart. Balsam fir trees have soft, flat needles, with two white lines on the back of the needles running its length - NS is the balsam fir Christmas tree capital of the world! Hemlock needles are very similar to those of balsam fir but are shorter, and the hemlock grows much larger. Spruce has prickly, square shaped needles - our provincial tree, the red spruce, has reddish bark. White pine has little bundles of five long needles.



Distinctive white lines on the back of balsam fir needles

Hardwoods are 'deciduous' trees which lose their leaves. Along the trail, you'll recognize white birch, but also look for the gold tint to the bark of yellow birch - its twigs taste and smell like wintergreen! There are several varieties of maple, with variations in leaf shape and twigs - new twigs of red maple are red, while sugar maple twigs look like brown sugar.



Hawthorn

Hawthorn has zigzag branches - watch for the thorns! White flowers are followed by red/orange fruit which resemble little apples. Hazelnut's spring catkins and tiny flowers are replaced by nuts covered in bristled husks in late summer.



Beaked Hazelnut

Fungi are nature's recyclers - Unlike plants which use chlorophyll to make food, fungi use enzymes to release nutrients they are able to absorb from organic material. The mushrooms, puffballs, yeasts and molds help to break down dead and dying material. While some types of mushrooms in NS are edible, others are toxic - the rule of thumb is if you're not certain, don't touch it!



Witches' Broom



Bracket Fungus

Rust fungus on fir trees cause extra twigs to grow from one spot creating a witches' broom. Bracket fungus are also called shelf fungus or 'conks' - artists use some varieties as a 'canvas'.