

March 2015 Newsletter

Introduction

Spring is finally here. It's just buried under all that snow. The winter was very cold and brought lots of snow. Snowshoeing conditions were good in spite of snow depths. Breaking trail was difficult but once the trail was broke you could sometimes walk on it without snowshoes.

Winter is usually a quieter time for getting out on adventures. The shorter days and poor weather make planning more difficult. We did however get out on a few adventures. You can read about them and see pictures in the [Winter 2015 Adventures](#) section below.



Spring Flowers on the [Blue Trail](#) at [Meduxnekeag Valley Nature Preserve](#) in Woodstock.

The good news is that the winter weather gives us more time to work on the website. We have added 20

trails and 21 photos to the website in the past three months. There are now 344 trails and 1482 photos on the website.

Spring brings melting snow, mud and park openings. Check out the [Park Openings section](#) below to find out the dates for all the park openings in the province. Spring can be a messy time of year that makes trails and access difficult, but the snow melt and mud are soon replaced with wildflowers and tree leaves. For a short time before summer the woods are revived with new life but still lack the menacing mosquitos and flies. I implore you to get out and celebrate the magic of spring. It's good for the soul after such a long and cold winter.

Winter 2015 Adventures

During the winter months we managed to get out enough to shake off the winter blues. This is a short summary of our adventures. We hope you had the chance to get out and have your own adventures.

Strawberry Marsh

One cold day in January I decided that we had to get out of the house. I bundled up the kids and covered their skin. I packed them into the car and took them snowshoeing at [Strawberry Marsh](#). The trail around [Strawberry Marsh](#) in the [Miramichi](#) is a beautiful place in any time of the year.

We didn't need our snowshoes since the trail is also used as a main snowmobile trail. We wore them anyway. When we got half way around the trail we decided to go out and check the ice on the river. When we got to the shore my daughter asked if we could cross the ice to Beaubears Island. We wouldn't have time on that day so we stayed near the shore.

The kids had fun sliding on the slope of clear ice along the shore. They were also fascinated by the ice volcanoes we found just off shore. They were formed by ice that had formed during high tide being pushed up by submerged rocks as the tide receded. Eventually the kids got cold so we returned to the car and headed home for some hot chocolate to warm up.



Ice volcanos near the shore on the Strawberry Marsh Trail.

South Riverfront Trail

One night in February I decided to go for a walk. I didn't have my snowshoes so I had to find a trail that was plowed. I was driving through [Fredericton](#) so I decided that I would park near the playhouse and walk towards downtown on the [South Riverfront Trail](#). I wanted to take a time lapse of the skating rink at Officers Square so I hoped people were out skating.



A flock of Chimney Swifts over the old bridge abutments on the South Riverfront Trail.

It was starting to get dark and the sky was turning a pinkish hue. When I reached the pedestrian bridge I noticed a swarm of birds flitting to and fro in the air over the old bridge abutments. They would land on the second abutment then fly back and forth. They would sometimes fly over my head towards the library only to return to the river and do it all again. I was

enthralled at how the whole swarm could change directions so quickly and so closely. I soon started thinking about the skating rink again and continued on my way.

I crossed the pedestrian bridge and headed for the skating rink. I took some time lapse from the corner of Regent Street but wasn't satisfied with the results so I headed down onto the ice. I spent the next 30 minutes watching the skaters skate around in circles. Some skaters left but others showed up to take their place.

I eventually returned to my car by walking down Queen Street. There were firetrucks on Queen Street near Isaac's Way restaurant but I never did figure out what they were doing.

Mi'gmaq Trail

For many years I have been curious about the painted turtle trailhead signs. The signs are near the bridge that crosses the Nepisiguit River north of Heath Steele Mines on Route 430. I first saw the signs while working in the area in 2005. I have since learned that they mark the Mi'gmaq Trail that starts in Bathurst and follows the Nepisiguit River all the way to Mount Carleton but has not been maintained. The trail recreates an ancient Native portage trail.



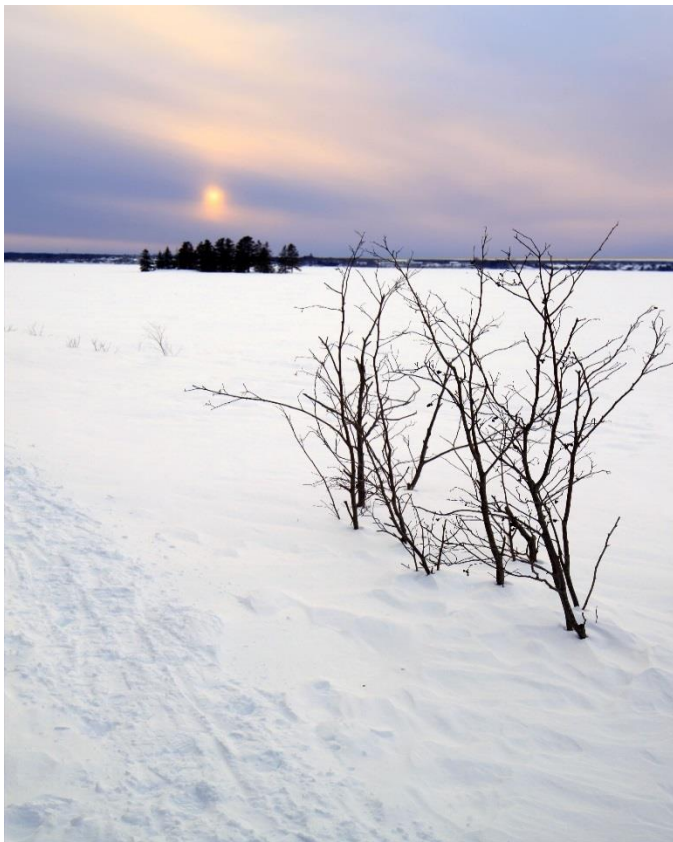
Walking on the ice on the Nepisiguit River.

Just past the trailhead sign we followed some orange ribbons. We thought they might mark the trail but they lead us down to the river. We didn't find the trail but we did have fun exploring the ice under the bridge. We eventually climbed up over the steep hill to the road. We returned to the car and headed for Bathurst and our next adventure at Daly Point Reserve. We would have to return in the summer months to once again search for signs of the trail.

For more details on our adventure and the Mi'gmaq Trail see the blog post [Ancient Trails and A Bird in the Hand](#).

Daly Point Nature Reserve

After our hunt for the Mi'gmaq Trail we headed to the [Daly Point Nature Reserve](#) in [Bathurst](#). It was a beautiful evening. We headed down the [Field Trail](#) and then onto the [Woodland Trail](#). Near the junction with the [White Pine Path](#) we stopped and enjoyed the chickadees landing on our hands. The kids love it. We have returned every year for the past several years.



Looking back at Daly Point in Bathurst Bay from the Salt Marsh Trail.

We eventually gave up on the Chickadees and continued to the [Salt Marsh Trail](#) via the [Warbler Trail](#). We explored the drifts near the bridge but by that time

the kids were getting cold. We took the [Salt Marsh Trail](#) back and enjoyed the subtle cloudy sunset. Near the [Field Trail](#) we ran into a couple of guys out taking photographs of the bay. After a short discussion about photography and cameras I caught up to the kids who had kept going to the lookout tower. We returned to the car and started our long drive back to the Miramichi.

If you want to read a longer account of our adventure check out the [Ancient Trails and A Bird in the Hand](#) blog post.

Sheldon Point Trail

Vicki and I were planning a kid free weekend when I saw a posting for a moonlight snowshoe. The moonlight snowshoe was planned for the [Sheldon Point Trail](#) at the [Irving Nature Park](#) in [Saint John](#). I had seen these advertisements before and had always wanted to go. This was our chance.

We left home and headed for Saint John. We arrived in Saint John at dusk and after a quick stop at a gas station we headed to the Park. We turned into the parking lot at the Sheldon Point trailhead.

We were surprised to see that many cars already lined up along the end of the parking lot. There were several astronomers setting up telescopes in a small area surrounded by vehicles. We got ready and watched as many more cars arrived. The parking lot filled up and people started parking along the road.



Vicki having a great time at Sheldon's Point at the Irving Nature Park in Saint John getting an astronomy lesson.

After a short talk by the organizers we started on the trail. There were snowshoers as far as the eye could see ahead and behind us. We all stopped in a field and were told stories about the constellations. The

stories were fascinating fables overlaid on the wonders of the night sky.

The group continued to Sheldon's Point. Near the point we crossed trails that were made by deer. There was one area that was well packed down in all directions. A coyote had taken down a deer here and all that was left was the packed snow.

At Sheldon's Point we had a lesson about the craters on the moon. We learned about the planets and after some questions everyone started back the trail. The trail was well packed on our return trip due to the numbers of people. Once back at the barn we had some hot chocolate, which was provided by the organizers. As we drank our hot chocolate we headed over to the large telescopes that were set up in the parking lot. We got a chance to see a star that was forming just under Orion's belt, a comet, and a close-up of the moon. The astronomers were excited to share their knowledge of the skies.

When the parking lot cleared enough we started our drive home. We tried to remember all the stories of the stars, which made the drive seem short.

Black Trail

We were planning to take the kids to the movies in Fredericton. We found out that the movie we wanted to see was at a better time in Woodstock. We had the full day so we planned to take the kids snowshoeing first. A favorite place for us to go snowshoeing in the Woodstock area is the [Meduxnekeag Nature Preserve](#).



Climbing the ridge on the Black Trail at Meduxnekeag Valley Nature Preserve.

We were planning to go along the river on the [Orange Trail](#) but someone had already broke trail on the [Black](#)

[Trail](#). The kids decided that would be our best option. The snow was so deep that it was hard to find the pegs that are used for trail markers. It became a game to find them. It wasn't too bad until we reached the end of the broke trail.

There were several places where we lost the trail. Each time we would find a marker under a bump in the snow just before giving up.

The trail looped around and we came to the stairs that lead down into the river valley. The consistency of the snow allowed us to ski down the hill on our snowshoes. It was fun. The kids had fun too.

The trail is a bit treacherous along the river but there were several large icicles and cliffs to explore. There are also beautiful views of the river below.

French Fort Cove

In March I had an afternoon to myself in the Miramichi. I decided it would be a perfect day to snowshoe the back trails at [French Fort Cove Park](#). I parked at the dead end on the old King George Highway. I was adjusting my snowshoes at the start of the [Fish Quarry Trail](#) when a couple of women walked by and complimented me on having all the proper equipment for the hike. I climbed the small set of stairs and started along the top of the ridge that traveled along the top edge of the ravine.

The day was sunny and cold but I quickly warmed up. I took some pictures through the trees of the deep ravine and soon came to a trail junction. The left trail would take me out to the nearby railroad tracks. The right trail steeply descended into the valley below.

With my snowshoes on I slipped and slid down the hill, grabbing on to trees to keep from falling. Walking in the deeper snow next to the trail was a better option but it wasn't always possible depending on the trees and bushes. I only fell once near the bottom.

I walked along the trail that traveled just above the stream. I soon came to the bridge that crossed the stream and continued the [Fish Quarry Trail](#). I figured I was making good time so I decided to continue on the [Creaghan Gulch Trail](#). Just past the junction the trail started climbing again. I soon got frustrated with the snowshoes and decided to try walking without them. If I stayed away from the edge of the trail I had no problem. I didn't put the snowshoes on again that day.

My next descent was the ridge that takes you down to the bridge at the head of the [Creaghan Gulch Trail](#). I

explored the stream and the valley below the bridge. At one point I just sat there and enjoyed the warmth of the sun.



The stream that flows into French Fort Cove near the bridge on the Creaghan Gulch Trail.

I crossed the small bridge made out of logs and once again climbed the hill up above the ravine. The trail on this side of the ravine follows old roads so it is much flatter and wider.

I eventually made my way back to the lookout above the Fish Quarry. I took several pictures up and down the ravine. I looked back at the wilderness to the north and could see signs of civilization to the south. I was running out of time now so I made my way back to the car. I wanted to return in to the lookout in the summer to maybe do some sunset or night photography.

Park Openings

Gated parks are accessible to vehicle access when opened. Other parks are accessible by vehicle as soon as the snow melts. Their opening means services within the park. This list only includes parks that are not open year-round. If there are any parks missing from the list please let me know.

May 15

Fundy Park - Visitor Center and other services.

Kouchibouguac Park – Reception Center and other services.

Fundy Trail Parkway – Gate, Reception Center, and other services.

Herring Cove – Gate and Services. (May 22 - Camping)

Mount Carleton – Gate and other services.

Mactaquac – Services

New River Beach – Services

Hopewell Rocks – Gate and services

May 29

De la République – All Services.

Parlee Beach – All Services.

Sugarloaf Park – Campground

The Anchorage – Gate and other services.

June 14

Middle Island Historic Park – Gate and Services.

July 1

Cape Jourimain Nature Centre – Visitor Centre.

Tips & Tricks

When you see a short yellow line on a trail map it indicates an adjacent trail. Click on the yellow line to show the name of the adjacent trail and a link to the trail page for that trail.

Note: Older maps may have a hiking icon on the yellow line. With these maps a link can be found by clicking on the hiking icon instead of the line itself.



For more information on how to use the Hiking NB website check out the Hiking NB User Manual. You can get the manual for free when you [subscribe](#) to the Hiking NB email list.

I continue to find better ways to use the Hiking NB website. If you have an interesting way you use the website please let me know. I would be interested in sharing it with the rest of the group.

Spring Plans

As of yet we don't have any big plans for spring. Spring can be a difficult time to hike with all the melting and flooding and mud. This usually means that we will be looking for mini-adventures wherever and whenever we can. If we are in the Miramichi we may drive to Kouchibouguac Park for the day and finish exploring the Kouchibouguac River Trail. If we end up in Moncton some day we may check out the back trails at Irishtown Nature Park. If we are near Saint John we may explore more of the trails at Rockwood Park. When the snow melts we may go for

walks on the Fredericton trails. If we stay close to home we may return to Pokiok Park or the Maliseet Trail to see how spring is progressing.

You don't have to take a week off and go on an expedition to find adventure. We have a hard time finding the time to go out on hikes but we make it happen. We have four kids between the ages of 8 and 12 sometimes going in different directions but they begin to notice if it's been a while since our last adventure. Spring is the perfect time for mini-adventures. Save the big adventures for the summer when the weather is warmer, the ground is dryer and when it's time to take a summer vacation.

Get Out and Explore

Is there anything keeping you from getting out and enjoying the many spectacular trails in the province? If you are just making excuses then stop. If there is something holding you back let us know. Maybe we can help you by providing information about a trail. Maybe we can help you find a group to go out hiking with. Maybe we can just provide moral support.

Hiking is good for your physical and mental health. It is flexible and available almost everywhere. All you need is a good pair of shoes or boots. It is a way for you to bond at a deeper level with anyone you choose to take along. It facilitates exploring and increases your appreciation for the natural world. You can't find this on the internet or on television. Use the Hiking NB website only for planning your adventures. Don't use it as a replacement. Nothing compares to being there. Now go get out and enjoy spring.

Thank you for all your interest in Hiking NB. We hope to see you on the trail.

James Donald

April 4, 2015