



COVID-19

The health and well-being of the Meduxnekeag River Association community is of utmost importance to us. These are challenging times and COVID-19 has changed many things for all of us. Sadly, this has meant that we had to cancel both the 2020 showcase competition and the annual fundraising dinner and auction.

We strongly believe in the benefits of outdoor learning and after consultation with teachers, it was decided that we could continue to get children safely out onto the preserve and our summer and fall tours were hugely successful. Students, from kindergarten to High School, were able to get some much-needed outdoor time, while maintaining social distancing and getting hands-on experience of the natural world to complement what they learn in class. Masks were worn as necessary or when social distancing was not possible. At present, we have bookings for guided snowshoe tours this winter and will continue to monitor the situation with COVID-19 to determine whether or not to go ahead with these tours. Given the current situation, it is unlikely that the Annual Dinner and Auction or the Showcase will take place in 2021. We also want to assure all our supporters and trail users that work is still ongoing in the background to ensure that these beautiful areas are protected. Water quality samples were collected by our staff several times this year at identified sites and trail maintenance is ongoing. While COVID-19 remains a threat, we urge you to continue to enjoy the trails if you feel comfortable doing so. Always remember to keep our community safe by following social distancing guidelines.



STAFFING

Jennifer MacDougald started work at the MRA as a summer student; after two years of this, she was hired as Education Coordinator, a position she filled from May 2016 until she resigned to accept a full-time teaching position in February 2020. During her time with MRA, Jen was a key staff member, going well beyond her education role to take on social media, website updates, preserve maintenance and a host of other roles. One of her major accomplishments was developing and finding the funding for the LUSH education loop at Bell Flats, a trail that has become one of our most popular. Another was the development of our Middle School workshop program.



Simon Mitchell has been an integral part of the team at the Meduxnekeag River Association for over 15 years. Simon was initially brought on to assist with the Provincial Water Classification project. After his work completing water quality sampling and characterizing the Meduxnekeag watershed, he contributed to the development of our extensive education programs and the expansion of the Meduxnekeag Valley Nature Preserve. Simon was also instrumental in the expansion of both the Annual Dinner and Auction (even serving as MC for a few years), and the Darlene Tapley Environmental Showcase. To the public, Simon may be best known for his role leading tours of the nature preserves. Simon has recently moved on to a full-time role as the Vice President of Resilient Habitats with WWF-Canada.



STAFFING

Kristyn Lyons is the new Project Coordinator at the MRA. Kristyn grew up in Doaktown, NB where she spent a lot of time in the Miramichi River and the forests surrounding it. She completed a Bachelor of Science in Biology at UNB Fredericton where she realized her passion for conservation and ecology. This prompted her to continue her education at Dalhousie University where she earned a Master of Resource and Environmental Management. Kristyn then returned to New Brunswick with the goal of working for non-profits to protect and conserve nature in her home province. Feel free to send Kristyn an e-mail at Kristyn@meduxnekeag.org if you have any questions, concerns, or ideas to share!



Holly Melanson recently joined the team at the MRA as the Outreach and Marketing Coordinator. Holly grew up in the Woodstock area, and was blessed with a childhood that immersed her in nature. She completed a Bachelor of Science at UNB Fredericton and A Bachelor of Science in Physiotherapy at Dalhousie University. She understands that the lands which make up the Meduxnekeag Valley Nature Preserve are incredibly special and is honoured to be involved in the protection, restoration and responsible use of this beautiful area. She is passionate about helping people of all ages to better understand, appreciate and care for our natural world and is looking forward to sharing knowledge with as many people as possible. Feel free to send Holly an e-mail at holly@meduxnekeag.org if you have any questions.



SNOWSHOEING

Looking for some great snowshoeing trails this winter? There are 7 beautiful trails on the preserve that are perfect for winter snowshoeing. The Black and Orange Trails can be accessed at 200 Red Bridge Road at the VanDine Falls/Leonard Woods Preserve. The Parking lot will be plowed to provide a safe parking option for those wishing to use the Orange and Black trails. Please note that the Purple Trail is CLOSED until spring due to the steep, rocky terrain that is not suitable for snowshoeing. The Wilson Mountain Nature Preserve offers 3 great trails: Red, Blue and Yellow for snowshoers. There is also off the road parking at 260 Red Bridge Road. Bell Forest provides a nice wide trail (without the need for bridges or rope hand rails) that is great for snowshoeing. This trail is not a loop and is approximately 2.5 km to the River (5.0km round trip back to your car). There is no off the road parking at this site. Trail entrance at 200 Bell Settlement Road. The Lush Education Loop (Gold Trail) located at 112 Bell Settlement Road is also a great option for snowshoeing for the entire family.

PUBLIC GUIDED SNOWSHOE TOURS

We are planning to offer several public guided snowshoe tours this winter. These will be open to both adults and children and will take place on the Lush Education Loop. Dates have yet to be confirmed but will most likely include one outing on the Family Day holiday in February, another over March break and others on various weekends. These events will be advertised on our social media sites.

SOCIAL MEDIA

With Holly Melanson joining the team as Outreach and Marketing coordinator we are aiming to increase our presence on social media. We are active on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. We post beautiful, informative posts at least once a day. Please help us connect with more people by following, commenting, liking and sharing our posts and recommending our page to your friends. We sincerely appreciate your support.

Facebook: Meduxnekeag Valley Nature Preserve

Twitter:@Meduxnekeag

Instagram:@Meduxnekeag

MEDUXNEKEAG RIVER ASSOCIATION 50/50 WEEKLY LOTTERY

During these unprecedented times, we found ourselves looking for new ways to raise funds to enable us to continue our efforts to maintain and expand the Meduxnekeag Valley Nature Preserve. The Meduxnekeag River Association 50/50 Weekly Lottery, operated by The Lotto Factory Global, was thus born and the first draw took place in August 2020. Tickets are \$2 each. Single tickets can be bought or you can pay for up to 52 weeks in advance. Proceeds from this 50/50 draw support our extensive outdoor environmental education programs and help us to acquire ecologically sensitive properties to enlarge our 900-acre Meduxnekeag Valley Nature Preserve which has nearly 25 kilometres of low impact walking trails, is home to more than 20 species of provincially rare plants and protects more than 11 kilometres of riparian shoreline.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

Trail maintenance is an ongoing process. With the assistance of volunteers and Board members, all trails have been cleared of fallen trees numerous times throughout the fall and winter. We will be holding a Spring Clean-up volunteer day once the snow melts, to get the trails ready for spring and summer use. Keep an eye out for this event on social media.



FALL SCHOOL TOURS/WORKSHOPS REPORT

Our fall school tours and workshops went ahead with physical distancing measures in place, and were hugely successful- 45 classes, over 600 students, visited the preserve via our school tours program this fall. In 2020, we commenced on-preserve workshops with Woodstock High School physical geography classes. We plan to build on this over the coming year, potentially targeting other High schools in the area. We hope to collaborate with teachers to develop tours and workshops focusing on field biology and ecology.



Cyanobacteria Sampling Project



Cyanobacteria (often called blue-green algae) are naturally occurring in our rivers and lakes here in New Brunswick. Cyanobacteria alone are not harmful, but sometimes they produce cyanotoxins that can be dangerous for humans and pets. The MRA began monitoring the Meduxnekeag for the presence of cyanotoxins in 2019 in partnership with ACAP Saint John. Small collectors that look like tea bags are deployed monthly in the summer and fall before being retrieved and sent for analysis.

The analysis determines whether toxins are present so that we can better direct our efforts to control cyanobacteria blooms. This work is important because scientists do not have a good understanding of where toxins are found and why, yet cyanobacteria blooms appear to be increasing in frequency because of climate change. The collectors we use contribute to that research so that we can build upon what we know about cyanotoxins in New Brunswick.

Annual General Meeting

The AGM is planned for February 11, at 7 p.m. and will be virtual only. Anyone interested in attending should send us an email at meduxnekeag@nb.aibn.com before Feb 10 & we will supply login information.