

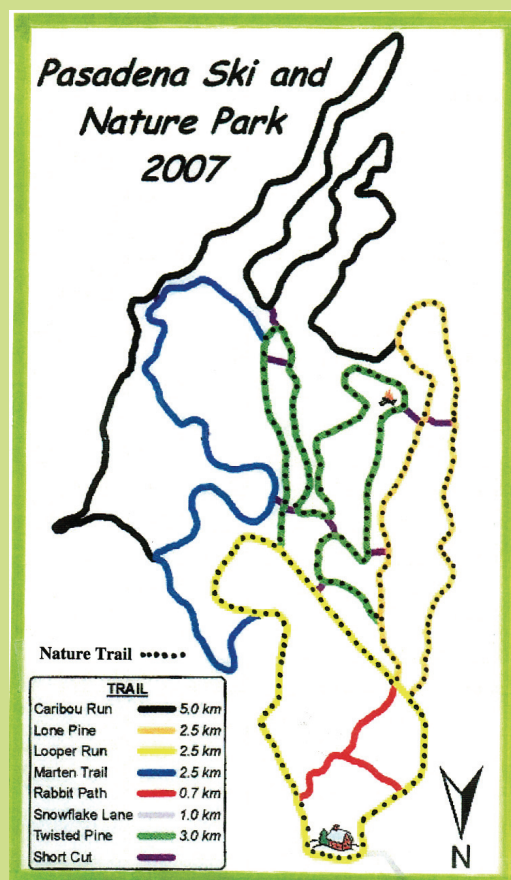
# Nature Walk &

*mushroom*  
**SPRING FORAY**

Sunday, May 20, 2012

# REPORT

Sponsors:



## Spring Nature Walk and Mushroom Foray 2012

Despite the long holiday weekend and the many regional activities, eighteen enthusiastic naturalists showed up for the spring nature walk and mushroom foray at the Pasadena Ski and Nature Park on May 20. While gathering in front of the chalet at 10 AM to introduce ourselves to each other, our first unexpected highlight of the day appeared from the woods in full view of everyone; a Red Fox with a Snowshoe Hare dangling from its jaws. The fox seemed rather unconcerned at the troop of wide-eyed humans before it, and stopped every 10 or 20 meters to curiously eye us and perhaps take a brief breather from its heavy load, then sauntered on, stopping again for a rest and a further viewing of us. This afforded ample opportunity, perhaps 5 to 10 minutes, for photos and fox-lore discussion.

The day was intermittently sunny, only a cool 12 degrees C, but birdsong filled the woods. Lois Bateman helped us identify the forest birds by their vocalizations and by sight. As we watched the hare-carrying fox from the chalet deck, we could hear the “squeaky gate” call of a Blue Jay in the distance and the “potato chip, potato chip” warble of an American Goldfinch as it flew by with its roller coaster flight pattern.

While looking at some bracket fungi near the chalet, we could hear the “O Canada, Canada, Canada” of the White-throated Sparrow. The long complicated song of the Ruby-crowned Kinglet was heard before entering the Looper Trail, and the shorter buzzy warble of a Black-throated Green Warbler followed soon after. We heard several males of these three species all along the trail, trying to set up territories to attract females. We later saw a couple of ground feeding White-throated Sparrows scratching in the old leaves under some trees. The Ruby-crowned Kinglet and the Black-throated Green Warbler both like to call from high up in the trees, often hidden behind the tips of branches. Some of us eventually managed to see males of both species.

As usual while birdwatching, we heard more species than we saw. The drumming of Ruffed Grouse was heard from at least three different locations on the trail. Since that sound carries for quite a distance (up to 500 meters) it was difficult to determine exactly how many males were out there trying to attract a mate! We also heard the lovely songs of a Fox Sparrow, a Northern Waterthrush, and a Purple Finch, all singing at a distance from the trail. Ovenbirds called “teacher, teacher, teacher” very loudly, but they are very good at hiding and were not seen. Yellow-rumped Warblers, Black-and-white Warblers and Magnolia Warblers were heard several times and a few of the slow-walkers actually managed to see all three near the end of the trail.

Most people don’t realize that one can move more quickly while “plant watching” or “fungi watching” than while “bird watching”. The plants and fungi cooperatively stay in one spot while you are trying to identify them! Almost as co-operative was a male Downy Woodpecker who alerted us to his presence while rat-a-tatting on the back of dead white birch as he probed under the bark in his search for a lunch of insects. He remained dedicated to his post while a small group of humans jostled around just a few metres away to get the best view.

With an American Crow and an American Robin completing our list, we saw and/or heard sixteen species of birds before lunch. The Ovenbird and the Magnolia Warbler were making their first appearance this spring and may have just arrived the night before our walk. Most of the other warblers had been around for a week or so and the robins and sparrows returned in late March/early April. There are still more warblers and flycatchers to return so the soundscape will be

even more complicated in June and the leaves will then be fully out making sightings of the birds and their identification even more challenging.

The warm spring had been rather dry so as a consequence no fresh fleshy ground mushrooms or gelatinous tree mushrooms were encountered as might be expected during or shortly after a prolonged wet spell this time of year. A few of the leathery or hard brackets of wood decay fungi were recorded or taken back to the chalet for identification. Garry Warren helped to identify these species which included the following:

- Red-Banded Polypore (*Fomitopsis* sp.) – on white birch
- Maze Polypore (*Cerrena unicolor*) – on alder
- Luminescent Panellus (*Panellus stipticus*) – on alder
- Crimped Gill (*Plicaturopsis crispa*) – on alder
- Yellow-Red Gill Polypore (*Gloeophyllum separium*) on conifer stump (last year's growth)
- Downy Turkeytail (*Trametes pubescens*) – on poplar log
- Tinder Polypore / Hoof Fungus (*Fomes fomentarius*) – on white birch
- Black Witches Butter (*Exidia glandulosa*) – on alder
- Puffball (*Lycoperdon* sp.) – on ground (old last year's shells)

Although lichens abound in the boreal forest, we only took notice of several prominent ones seen from the trail edges. Claudia Hanel pointed out a few of these including:

- Lungwort Lichen (*Lobaria pulmonaria*) on Red Maple
- Textured Lungwort (*Lobaria scorbiculata*) on Red Maple
- Beret Lichen (*Baeomyces* sp.) on ground
- Old Man's Beard (*Usnea* sp.) on spruce

The early warm spring weather had the leaves of trees and shrubs emerging, and spring wildflowers were blossoming perhaps two weeks earlier than "normal". The following were seen in bloom:

- Trailing Arbutus/Mayflower (*Epigaea repens*)
- Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)
- Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*) – almost finished blooming
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Chuckley Pears (*Amelanchier* spp.)
- Dwarf Mistletoe (*Arceuthobium pusillum*)
- Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*)
- Mountain (Green) Alder (*Alnus viridis/crispa*)
- White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)
- Skunk Currant (*Ribes glandulosum*)
- Red Currant (*Ribes triste*)
- Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor*)
- Several sedges (*Carex* spp.)

Several species exhibited flower buds that were not yet open, including:

- Wild Sarsaparilla (*Aralia nudicaulis*)
- Creeping Snowberry (*Gaultheria hispidula*)
- Mountain Holly (*Ilex mucronata*)
- Wild Lily-of-the-valley (*Maianthemum canadense*)
- Alderleaf Buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*)

Corn Lily /Blue Bead Lily (*Clintonia borealis*)  
Bristly Black Currant (*Ribes lacustre*)  
Blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*)  
Crackerberry/Bunchberry (*Cornus canadensis*)  
Pincherry (*Prunus pensylvanica*)  
Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*)

Several ferns were noted including one of the wood ferns (*Dryopteris* sp.), fiddleheads of the Cinnamon Fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*), and Ostrich Fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*). The tiny Oak Fern (*Gymnocarpium dryopteris*) was just beginning to unfurl. A distant fern relative, Woodland Horsetail (*Equisetum sylvaticum*) already showed fully formed spore cones.

Two types of abnormal bushy growths termed “witches brooms” were observed. Witches broom of Black Spruce is caused by the parasitic flowering plant, Dwarf Mistletoe (*Arceuthobium pusillum*), our smallest shrub. The other was a witches broom of Balsam Fir caused by the Fir Broom Rust (*Melampsorella caryophyllacearum*), a parasitic fungal infection which has a chickweed as its alternate host.

Several observations led to discussions of ecological interactions of different organisms in the boreal forest. A cut log showed softer heartwood decayed by fungi which in turn was tunnelled by carpenter ants. Woodpeckers are able to drill through the thinner outer intact wood in search of ants and other insects for food and as well easily excavate the interior softened and tunnelled wood for nesting cavities. Old woodpecker cavities are used by smaller forest birds for nesting. Both the woodpeckers and smaller birds are primarily insect eaters and therefore help control insect populations. Larger woodpecker cavities are also used as nesting sites by the small Boreal and Saw-Whet Owls who help control populations of forest rodents and squirrels which can deplete conifer seed crops and prevent adequate reforestation under certain conditions. This of course is just a very, very simplified food web which in reality contains hundreds or more individual species of bacteria, fungi, insects, other invertebrates, animals and plants. Very often we do not see or think about such intricate webs where even seemingly unrelated organisms such as wood decay fungi, carpenter ants and owls have a dependence on each other. Chainsaws, forest spraying, fires, the Owl Nest Box Project along the trails, and in many other ways, humans also insert themselves into this complex network of intermeshing activities.

Galls on the stems of blueberry shrubs also led to the discussion of the Blueberry Gall Wasp life cycle. Nearby shrubby young stems of Red Maple had their bark gnawed off by feeding Snowshoe Hare, reminding us of the initial fox observation and that particular food chain within the greater web of forest life. If one takes the time to observe closely many such observations and interrelationships become apparent and, of course, the woods change as the weeks go by and with the seasons.

Look for notices of other nature walks this summer!

Henry Mann  
Lois Bateman  
(Members of sponsoring organizations, PSNP, HNHS, & FNL)

Special thanks to the Pasadena Ski and Nature Park (PSNP) for use of their excellent facilities!





The fox and the hare.



Red-Banded Polypore type Conk



Beginning the Walk on the Looper Trail



Witches Broom on Balsam Fir



Watching while Garry Photos a Conk



Only bird identified by everyone !



LICHENS added!



# FORAY

## NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

2012 2012 2012  
2012 2012  
2012 2012 2012  
2012 2012  
2012 2012 2012  
2012 2012  
2012 2012 2012

## Terra Nova National Park

Headquarters: *Terra Nova Hospitality Home*

September 28-30, 2012

### GUEST FACULTY

David Boertmann  
Gro Gulden  
Nils Hallenberg  
Jermy Hayward  
Renée Lebeuf  
Faye Murrin  
Todd Osmundson  
André Paul  
Michele Pieri-Hormore  
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EARLY BIRD SPECIAL BEFORE JUNE 30

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