

Our Wildlife

News from the Wildlife Division

Department of Environment & Conservation
Natural Heritage Branch

Finding answers in a bear's hair

Wildlife Division researchers and their partners are conducting genetic analysis on strands of black bear fur to estimate the number of black bears living on the Island of Newfoundland

The Wildlife Division's Habitat, Game and Fur Section endeavours to sustainably manage game species within Newfoundland and Labrador. One of its goals is to manage wildlife populations to allow for sustainable use practices, including hunting and trapping. Information collected from hunters and trappers helps wildlife managers make important decisions about the number of animals that may be harvested annually. This information, along with a series of wildlife monitoring techniques, is used to estimate the size, demographics, and density of each of the province's three big game species: moose, caribou, and black bear.

As part of the ongoing management of black bears within Newfoundland and Labrador, the Wildlife Division, working closely with Conservation Officers from the Department of Natural Resources, has recently established three black bear hair-snagging grids across insular Newfoundland. The grids are set up and operated annually in June and July.

The grids consist of approximately fifty, 75-km² blocks located on the Northern, Baie Verte, and Bonavista Peninsulas. Baited barbed wire triangles are positioned at the centre of these grids. Each hair-snagging station is marked with warning signs to inform the public of both the presence of the barbed wire and the possible presence of black bears in the area. In order to reach the bait, a bear has to pass the triangular, barbed wire enclosure. As the bear rubs against the wire, the barbs trap samples of hair. Each site is checked every 10 days, hair samples are collected, and sites are re-baited.

In an effort to maximize the use of resources, the black bear grids also provide a sampling opportunity for insect species. As baits decompose they attract an assortment of scavengers, including several local species of carrion beetles.

Beetle species are collected during each site visit and identified by biologists in the Wildlife Division's Endangered Species and Biodiversity Section.

At the end of the sampling season the hair samples are sent to Memorial University for genetic analysis. Geneticists process each sample to determine how many individual bears visited each site over the course of the sampling.

Early work from these grids has yielded some interesting insights into the uniqueness of black bears on the Island of Newfoundland.

Identifying individual bears helps estimate the density of bears within the sampling areas and, along with information received from big game licence returns, helps wildlife managers understand the dynamics of black bear populations on the Island.

Tracking the Wanderer

The peregrine falcon is listed as a vulnerable species under Newfoundland & Labrador's Endangered Species Act because it possesses characteristics that make it particularly sensitive to human activities and natural events.

The Wildlife Division has conducted peregrine surveys of Labrador since 1984. This effort has been led by Joe Brazil, who, after an exemplary career of nearly 30 years with the Wildlife Division, will be retiring this year.

The survey goal is to determine the number of breeding peregrine pairs in the area and assess population trends over time. The number of adults, chicks, and eggs are recorded, as well as the age of the chicks.

The survey is intended to be conducted once every five years; however due to financial and logistical challenges, data collection takes place over a two-year period every five years. Survey results help inform provincial and national management strategies for peregrine falcons.

This year marked the beginning of our sixth two-year survey, which focused on known nest sites along coastal Labrador from just north of Nain and south to Table Bay, and partially on Labrador Inuit Lands (LIL).

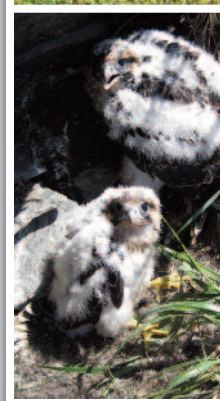
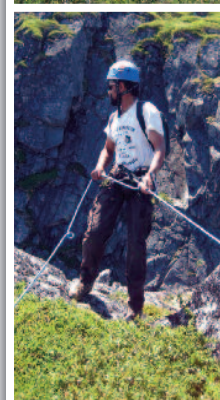
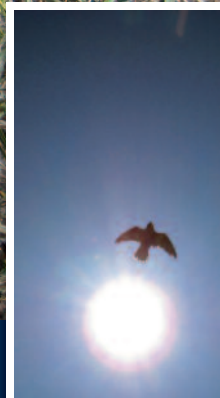
A new field crew included Shelley Garland, Bruce Rodrigues, and Claudia Hanel from the Wildlife Division, Jim Goudie with the Nunatsiavut Government, along with Geoff Goodyear, a helicopter pilot who has been a part of the peregrine falcon survey crew since the program's inception.

Additional surveys were conducted on small mammals, invertebrates, and plants. Three days of surveying were based from a camp along the shore of Tikkoatokak Bay, as well as in Hopedale.

We surveyed cliffs by flying closely along a cliff face at slow speeds in an attempt to flush an adult peregrine, therefore locating the nest by either seeing where the bird flushed from, or the location to which it returned. The helicopter hovered over potential nest sites to give observers time to search the ledges for falcon activity, eggs, young, and adult falcons. Surveyors first had to establish visual cues and a "search image" of the falcon nests, as they are usually well camouflaged along the cliff face, often times on small ledges and in crevices.

Years of data collection from past surveys allowed us to return to cliffs with known nest sites, although falcons may not return to these exact nest location year after year. In such cases, the surrounding area is searched as well. One indication that a cliff has been used for nesting or perching is the presence of bright orange lichen and fresh droppings, referred to as "wash."

Once an accessible nest with chicks was located, field crew members rappelled down to the nest to collect information about the chicks, and band their legs for future identification. This season, three chicks were banded while a very territorial parent swooped and squealed from above.



Experience of a lifetime

NB student wins three-day flyfishing excursion

The Atlantic Provinces' Youth Hunting and Fishing Exchange Program embraces the heritage and culture of hunting and fishing in Atlantic Canada and encourages our youth to become involved in conservation awareness in our own communities.

Through their participation in programs like the Firearm Safety/Hunter Education Course, young people aged 12 to 17 can also win an opportunity to experience other cultures and lifestyles involving hunting and fishing in our neighbouring provinces.

New Brunswick exchange winner Kendra Ferris, 13, was accompanied by her father, Walter Ferris, on a recent salmon fishing trip to Newfoundland and Labrador. They were welcomed to Newfoundland and Labrador by Wildlife Division Director John Blake.

"They taught us plenty about flyfishing, and how to get the fly in just the right spot. With this knowledge and useful equipment, me and my dad each caught a salmon, of course mine was bigger than his. Newfoundland is a beautiful place, and I had lots of fun, which makes me want to go back next year. We would like to say thank you and we appreciate all the help we were given by the people who organized this experience of a lifetime."

- Kendra Ferris, 13

Kendra and Walter enjoyed three days of guided salmon fishing on the Humber and Main Rivers. Transportation to the Main River was provided by Universal Helicopters. It was the first time either of them had been in a helicopter. Pilot Darren Barrett made both Kendra and Walter feel very comfortable with the whole experience.

They were quite taken with the beautiful scenery and wildlife they observed during the two hours of flight time. Great food and accommodations, and wonderful hospitality were provided by Sterling and Irene Pittman of

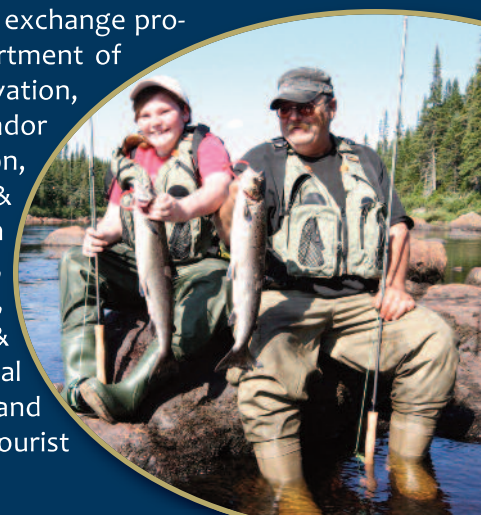
Big Falls Tourist Lodge. Our guests also spent some time at the Upper Humber Rod and Gun Club in Deer Lake, where they had the opportunity to do some trap shooting with Conservation Services staff.

Kendra drew the name of Newfoundland and Labrador's 2009 Youth Exchange winner, 16-year-old James Humby of Portugal Cove-St. Phillips.

James was chosen from almost 300 youth who participated in Newfoundland and Labrador's Firearms Safety/Hunter Education Course between July 2008 and June 2009.

In October, he will travel with his father, Barry Humby, to New Brunswick to participate in an upland bird and waterfowl hunt sponsored by the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and White Pines Hunting Lodge.

Sponsors for this year's exchange program include the Department of Environment & Conservation, Newfoundland & Labrador Outfitters Association, Newfoundland & Labrador Conservation Officers Association, Barnes Sporting Goods, Upper Humber Rod & Gun Association, Universal Helicopters Newfoundland Limited and Big Falls Tourist Lodge.





Fernald's Milk Vetch



Yellow Lady Slipper



Fiery Lousewort



Long's Braya



Barrens Willow



Fernald's Braya

Port au Choix residents commit to protection of rare plants

St. Theresa's Elementary School and the Town of Port au Choix have entered into a Municipal Stewardship Agreement that designates areas of the Limestone Barrens habitat for conservation.

Wallace Young, MHA for St. Barbe, signed the agreement in Port au Choix on behalf of Environment and Conservation Minister Charlene Johnson on Sept. 22. Other signatories included Dulcie House, Limestone Barrens Habitat Stewardship Program; Beverly Plowman, Principal of St. Theresa's Elementary School; and Carolyn Lavers, Town of Port au Choix. Gerry Byrne, MP for Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte, also attended and addressed the students.

The agreement commits St. Theresa's students and the Town of Port au Choix to actions that will help ensure the sustainability of the Limestone Barrens' unique plants species. In a

poem written and recited by St. Theresa's Grade 5 students, they told the audience to "always walk, don't ride or drive, stay on the trails so the plants can survive."

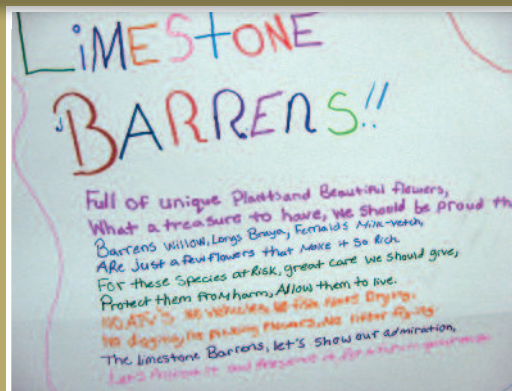
"Co-operation and dedication to protection of the environment are key elements of agreements like this one," said Minister Johnson. "The spirit of stewardship is alive and well in towns like Port au Choix, and this is a wonderful example of residents committing to work with government to continue to find a balance between the natural environment, economic growth and development and sustainability."

Plant life on the limestone barrens contributes greatly to the biodiversity of the province. The Strait of Belle Isle Ecoregion on the Great

Northern Peninsula fosters a significant number of rare or unique species, including Long's Braya (assessed as being endangered by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada) and Fernald's Braya (designated as threatened). Of the 298 rare vascular plants on the Island of Newfoundland, 104 of them occur on the Limestone Barrens, and 22 of these species are found only on the Great Northern Peninsula.



The Limestone Barrens Habitat Stewardship Program, an initiative funded in part by the federal Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk, seeks to protect Limestone Barrens habitat and associated at-risk species through stewardship agreements, restoration, enhancement and educa-



Above: Art depicting the beauty of the Northern Peninsula's Limestone Barrens by the students of St. Theresa's Elementary in Port au Choix. Centre: Dulcie House of the Limestone Barrens Habitat Stewardship Program and Cathy Regular of the Wildlife Division with the town's new highway sign.



FIREARM SAFETY/HUNTER EDUCATION

Approximately 70 certified Firearm Safety/Hunter Education (FS/HE) instructors in Newfoundland & Labrador provide training to more than 3,500 firearm owners and new hunters annually. In August 2009, instructors gathered at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College in Corner Brook for three days to share ideas and learn about new policies and teaching techniques related to the FS/HE Program. Instructors were recognized for their valued contribution to continuing the heritage of safe, responsible and knowledgeable hunting. The FS/HE Program involves a partnership between the College of the North Atlantic, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Canadian Firearms Program) and the Department of Environment and Conservation's Wildlife Division, and is recognized throughout Canada for its high standards and successful delivery.



2009 Instructors' Conference



What's New at the Wildlife Division

“How to Trap Coyotes” Workshops

As a part of the Department of Environment & Conservation's five-year caribou strategy, the Wildlife Division has been hosting a number of workshops and seminars specifically designed to improve general awareness about predators, predator hunting and trapping, and the Newfoundland woodland caribou. “How to Hunt” workshops for both coyote and black bear have been held in several locations across the Island.

Four “How to Trap Coyotes” workshops are currently scheduled for October 13-17 in Plum Point, Stephenville, Gander and St John's. During these workshops, individuals will learn about coyote trapping techniques, including equipment needs, trap preparation, site selection and actual trap sets. There will be opportunities to win prizes, and participants will also be able to review some of the latest technology and equipment available.

There is no cost to participate in these workshops; however, attendance will be limited during each of the sessions. To ensure a space is reserved for you, please contact the Stewardship and Education Section of the Wildlife Division in Corner Brook at (709)637-2006 or email



Becoming an Outdoors Woman

The Becoming an Outdoors Woman program (BOW), the outdoor skills training program for women 18 years of age and older, will take place from October 23-25 at Killdevil Camp, Lomond, Gros Morne National Park.

Participants can choose four half-day courses from a total of 13 possibilities, including fly fishing, outdoor survival, wilderness first aid, shotgun, rifle, hiking and backpacking, GPS navigation, and Map and Compass, to name a few.

The cost of the program is \$180 for two night's accommodations, seven meals and the use of demonstration equipment. All classes are at an introductory level for people who have little or no experience.

If you have a sister, mother, friend or co-worker who might be interested, please let them know of this opportunity. This program is open to the general public, and registration is now available.

For more information or to register, contact:

Lucy O'Driscoll
BOW Coordinator
(709) 229-7189 or 229-7888
Lucyodriscoll@gov.nl.ca



Nathan Spence and Nicole King of the Wildlife Division present a Foxpro FX3 electronic caller to door prize winner Leslie Hiscock of Burgeo during a recent “How to Hunt Coyote” workshop.



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