



Friends of
Mashkinonje

www.mashkinonje.com

The Wetlands Observer

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Home of Porella and Blue Jellyskin

Community Accessible Trail Improvement

*By: Chuck Miller, Superintendent Killarney/
French River/Mashkinonje/ W. Sandy Island/
Manitou Islands/Daisy Lake Provincial Parks*

The Friends of Mashkinonje along with Sudbury East Board of Trade and volunteers are continuing to develop a more inclusive community at Mashkinonje by offering upgraded and new facilities that make trails more accessible to the greater community.

Six hundred meters of the scenic and nature-rich Loudon Peatland Trail has been upgraded with finely crushed gravel, curbs, ramps, a lookout platform, strategically placed benches (with arm rests), reduced slopes and accessible vault toilets. These improvements will now provide great opportunities to observe wetlands for almost anyone who wishes to do so – including those with assistive devices ranging from wheelchairs to strollers.

There are also future plans in the works to add accessible nature interpretive information – stay tuned as there is more to come in 2012.

If you would like to become part of the effort, contact the Friends of Mashkinonje and help make a difference in your community.

Visit the park's newest trail, bring a friend, spread the word about the new trail – I think you will be very pleasantly surprised.



The Friends of Mashkinonje partnered with Nipissing University, the MNR and the Nipissing Naturalists Club last year, to study stand dynamics of Black Ash. Black Ash grow in swamps and while there, we are looking for a species at risk Flooded Jellyskin. Our adventure is documented below. The study results will come out later this year.



Photo Left to right, Jeff Dech Nipissing University, Ed Morris Ontario Parks, Shaun Thompson Kempville MNR,

**How many of you know what Porella and Blue Jellyskin are?
They are not organisms from another planet.
You are not alone; most don't know what they are.**



They are new species found in Mashkinonje in 2011, not to say that they haven't existed in the park for centuries. Porella is a Liverwort and Blue Jellyskin is a Lichen and both are found in wetlands. The best time to see them is on a damp day, when they plume up with air borne moisture. Otherwise they are very difficult to find.

Mashkinonje is designated as a wetland park because a third of the park is covered in wetlands. For most, exploring a wetland is not desirable. Wetlands are considered to be nature's nurseries because of all the life that is drawn to them. This means that there are all sorts of new species to us, that we normally don't see. So if you want to learn something new, pick up a book on wetland plants, mosses or lichens and come learn more along one of the Mashkinonje trails. We will be installing new interpretive signage sharing our wetland knowledge along the Loudon and Samoset Trails later this year.



Photo: Ryan Leblanc



The Quest for the Elusive Flooded Jellyskin.

By Fred Pinto

The Flooded Jellyskin (*Leptogium rivulare*) is a globally rare lichen, Ontario having 5 of the 8 known occurrences in North America. The earliest record of this cryptic lichen, it looks like a grey smudge on a tree trunk. There is a sample stored at the Royal Ontario Museum from Long Point on Lake Temagami collected in 1946 (find out more: http://www.rom.on.ca/ontario/risk.php?doc_type=fact&id=301&lang=en .

The question is where is Long Point? No one had heard of Long Point and looking at a map of the lake shows many points of land that are long. So where do we start? A local source at the Temagami MNR suggested we look at Witch's Point. Witch's Point is local name not on a map. It turned out to be a point of land that sticks out into Witch's Bay, the bay being marked maps. Witch's Point looks like a witch's nose or Long Point in Lake Ontario, so we thought this was a good starting point for our search.

Maps of the area and recent e-photos plus older aerial photos were collected by Shaun Thompson, District Ecologist from Kemptonville District MNR and a leader in the search for Flooded Jellyskins. Sean narrowed the possible locations we needed to search. We set off on a long bone-shaking boat ride to our first search location near Witch's Point. We clambered up the loose scree and fought our way through balsam fir thickets and cedar windthrows to get to the first set of ponds where we searched the edges for the Flooded Jellyskin. We did not have any luck but Sean still had his number 1 spot that now looked even better. He spotted a sugar maple

stand up the escarpment from the shore and behind it was a pond that the photos showed were flooded in the spring but turned mucky in late summer.

I thought the person that had collected the first sample would not have gone too far off shore to look for plant samples so I volunteered with others to search the sloughs along the shore of Witch's Bay. These sloughs were covered with cotton grass, pitcher's plants and tamarack. Tamarack indicates the water levels do not change very much making these wet areas here unsuitable for Flooded Jellyskin.

Brian Naylor also from the MNR and Shaun Thompson set off to look for the lichen. After climbing the escarpment they walked through a magnificent maple stand that looked like it could be in the Muskokas. Then they navigated through knee high poison ivy and reached the edge of the pond. The poison ivy and maple indicated soils with higher calcium. The pond was dry and showed evidence of water levels fluctuating over a meter in the growing season. These were almost ideal conditions (high calcium and deep fluctuation in surface water) for the Flooded Jellyskin. But time was running out so where should they look? Shaun took off instinctively stepping on firm soil while Brian followed often stepping into muck that sucked him in to his knees. Shaun had formed an image of the environmental conditions that would favour the Flooded Jellyskin. It did not take him long to point to a grey smudge on the tree trunk and said "Here it is!"



Flooded Jellyskin – the Quest Continues – Mashkinonje Provincial Park

Wednesday August 24, 201

Undaunted by the grey skies and rainy forecast and inspired by the success of the group the day before, a dozen people met at the Loudon Peatland access point in Mashkinonje Provincial Park on August 24 to continue the search for the Flooded Jellyskin and to learn more about Black Ash. Park superintendent Chuck Miller and Friends of Mashkinonje president Angela Martin welcomed everyone to the Park. Researcher Dr. Jeff Dech of Nipissing University introduced his student Elisha Townshend who would describe their study of Black Ash stand dynamics in Mashkinonje.

Although Black Ash stands are common but rather sparsely distributed across the landscapes of Ontario, little is known about how the stands develop and the factors that influence them. Elisha and Jeff will add a

great deal to what is known currently about Black Ash stand dynamics when they finish their research project. But research is almost never done as one question leads to another, and the group wished Jeff and Elisha the best of luck with their fascinating work which will most likely turn into a larger research program.

Famous Jellyskin experts Shaun and Susan Thompson of Kemptonville brought their enthusiasm and knowledge of the Flooded Jellyskin to the Black Ash swamps of Mashkinonje. Black Ash swamps are habitat for wood frogs, a host of birds, and blue-spotted salamanders, like the black one Susan spotted miraculously on the black soil that dark day. But to Shaun and Susan the real appeal of Black Ash is as potential habitat for the Flooded Jellyskin. However, we soon

found out that not any Black Ash swamp will do for this lichen, which seems to be very discriminating.

We learned from these experts, who spent many days bending and crouching in swamps to check tree trunks, if you are planning to search for the rare, diminutive Flooded Jellyskin, it is best to try to narrow down the list of candidate swamps before setting out. As Fred Pinto explained in his account of Day 1, not only does the Flooded Jellyskin need temporary pools that flood to the right depth, it seems to require the pools to be on calcium-rich substrates (dolomite, marble, limestone, till), not granite. Shaun and Susan, who have found many spots where this lichen occurs in Ontario, use Sugar Maple as a clue to the possible location of the richer soils that might have the right calcium content. Any Black Ash swamp or temporary pool that floods to the right depth and is surrounded by maple stands is a good choice for a search in their opinion.

Shaun pronounced August through to snowfall as the best time to look for this lichen because the flooded situations it prefers would be under water (or snow) at other times of year. Water is necessary to plump up the thallus (the main body of the lichen) and disperse the spores. As Fred reported, water levels that reach a meter or so in the growing season without subsiding until mid July or August are preferred. Shallow vernal pools will not do. Air photos (see Figure 1 below) can



Figure 1. Air photo showing "black holes" in a hardwood stand. These holes are temporary pools that could be deep enough to provide good conditions for the Flooded Jellyskin

help to find pools with the right depth – pools with high potential look like small, black holes on such photos. But there are other clues – such as tree trunks without moss at their bases, and trunks with yellowish pollen lines at least a foot or two up showing where the waterline was in spring when conifers were releasing pollen. Look for the jellyskin below the waterline on the swollen (buttressed) bases of Black Ash, maple, or even elm or dogwood in these situations. Although

found in isolated pools, the jellyskin is also reported to occur in quiet spots on rivers and on lakeshores, if flooding happens to the right depth and the action of water and ice doesn't scrape it off.

Since Angela Martin kindly opened her door to the group for a lab session, Shaun was able to get into detail about the microscopic world of the Flooded Jellyskin. The passion of this very tall man for a very small lichen was a sight to behold. We learned that a lichen is an odd entity that is really more of a partnership or a lifestyle than an organism. In a lichen, a fungus provides the structure (the home) for photosynthetic algae or cyanobacteria that produce food for the partnership. This symbiotic relationship is very tight – the fungus portion of a lichen is never found growing alone.

Shaun explained that the smooth thallus of the Flooded Jellyskin has MANY pinkish apothecia (dot-like reproductive structures – see Figure 2 below),



Fig. 2. Flooded Jellyskin showing gray thallus and pink apothecia.

unlike other jellyskin species possibly in the area which don't sport these glorious pink structures. If there is any doubt about the species, it can be confirmed by microscopic examination of an apothecium – but choose a BIG one! Slice a thin section carefully from a pink apothecium with a razor blade or craft knife (as if slicing mushrooms) and use a microscope to look for 4 spore packets per ascus (an ascus is the "spore mother cell" in this type of sac fungus – see Figure 3 next page). Other jellyskin species have 6 to 8 or more spore packets per ascus.

Any sightings of the Flooded Jellyskin, a threatened species, would add to the meagre catalogue of occupied sites in Ontario and increase our knowledge of this rare, diminutive species. You can find out more about this lichen from the Nipissing Naturalists guide entitled "Species at Risk in the Nipissing Watershed", and from the Nipissing Naturalists web site <http://www.nipissing-naturalist.com/SAR/index.htm>.



Figure 3. Section through an apothecium of the flooded jellyskin showing several asci (spore mother cells). The black arrow points to one ascus that shows clearly the 4 spores per ascus typical of the Flooded Jellyskin

Story and Pictures by Kandyd Szuba, PhD
Biologist, EACOM Timber Corporation, Nairn Centre
A Grateful Guest of the Friends of Mashkinonje Park



FRED PINTO

Nominated for a United Nations Award



The United Nations designated 2011 as the International Year of Forests and created an award for International Forest Heroes. Our friend, Fred Pinto (see article above) was one of 15 individuals to make the short list for this award. This is a tremendous honor even making the short list. Fred has shared his knowledge with us on Mashkinonje hikes, partnered in our Black Ash, Flooded Jellyskin study and lead groups like the representatives from the Ontario Nature Northern Region.

We wish you all the best Fred in your quest for knowledge, protecting our world and helping others.

Ontario Nature, Northern Regional Meeting

In June, we hosted the Ontario Nature semi-annual Northern Regional Meeting. Friends' organizations like ours and naturalists clubs presidents and representatives meet to share activities, ideas with one another and learn of Ontario Nature initiatives. Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Elliot Lake, Manitoulin Island, Sudbury and North Bay groups take part. This is an important function for our group because we would never have this opportunity to interface with like groups given our distance. This gathering creates friendships with knowledgeable people who are willing to share, participate and help. You can learn more about Ontario Nature at www.ontarionature.org




Photo: Jeff Dech and Ontario Nature group in a Black Ash swamp

2011 AGM and Picnic



ing out the barrier free benches built by Harley and Liz Lang in the picture below. They are higher than regular benches. This trail will be our signature trail for interpretive signage.

To keep the energy flowing, we had a scrumptious BBQ. After lunch, some of the attendees took a boat ride along the West Arm past the north and west Mashkinonje shores to Warren Bay.

We would like to thank the members who came and those who brought auction items, you made our day special. For those who could not make it, we hope to see you at the 2012 AGM and picnic. Have a great year! 

Our AGM's and picnics are always fun. We get the business done quickly and efficiently, so we can get on with the fun things.

Bidding at the 2011 auction was brisk; there was a lot of action over the pretty, hand made aprons and camping gear. We didn't worry about the bidding; everyone knew all the winnings were going to a good cause. This year and next our biggest project is the Barrier Free trail. We have widened the trail, put down fine gravel that packs well, placed curbs along edges with slopes, built specially designed benches every few hundred feet and signage (to come). Angela and Peter were try-



Halloween Hike

The weatherman's forecast for this hike was correct. It drizzled and rained, adding to the ambience. It was perfect for the 10 hikers to see Blue Jellyskin and Porella, two new species found in the park this year. We have been looking for Flooded Jellyskin a species at risk documented in the "Species at Risk in the Lake Nipissing Watershed" book. Blue Jellyskin is rare but not at risk. To find it, you have to look when the air is damp allowing the Blue Jellyskin to plume up. On a dry day, it shrinks below the moss.

The rain did not dampen the day and everyone enjoyed the full planned hike.



2011 Canoe Winner



Helen Powis from Kitchener was the lucky winner of this beautiful canoe.

Happy Paddling!



Thunder Boxes

A thunder box or pit toilet has been installed at Pebble Beach. There are directional signs to it, up on the hill behind the beach.

Thank you Ontario Parks!

Appreciation

When we started to work on Mashkinonje in 1998, it was a local initiative. Nothing has changed; most of you have been on board for our whole journey. We still need and appreciate your support. We could not have created what we have today without you and we should all be very proud of our accomplishments.



Thank you **Ontario Parks** for allowing us to make Mashkinonje an integral part of our life.

Thank you **Economic Partners – Sudbury East West Nipissing** for supporting many of our projects.



Thank you to the **Municipality of French River** for administering the Ontario Job Creation Program for us for 4 years including this winter. You help us with the administration not possible by the Friends.

Thank you **Shell Environmental Fund** for contributing to our bridge and tower.



Thank you **Daniel D. Longlade, FCA, Collins Barrow** for completing our financial statements and tax return, you are a life saver!



Thank you to the **provincial government** and the **Ontario Job Creation Program**. Your funds allow us to make boardwalks across the many wet areas, making it possible for hiking.

Thank you **Due North Marketing** for hosting our website and spreading our joy to the world.

Thank you **Jay Tee Graphics Ltd.** for finalizing the page layout and pdf creation.



Thank you **Sudbury East Board of Trade** for supporting Mashkinonje from inception.

Thank you to the silent auction donors.

Ontario Nature, Mountain Co-Op, S.C. Johnstone, Euraka, Coleman, Harley Lang, Claude Bouffard, Cathy McManus, Peter Beckett, Diane Furchner, Sheldon Macgregor

Mashkinonje-North Monetteville Christmas Bird Count

Monday January 2, 2012

The Friends of Mashkinonje held their 10th Christmas Bird Count on January 2nd. The day was below zero with snow varying from none to heavy and windy. There was open water at the West Arm Narrows and Lavigne but all the water birds headed south before previous freezes. Seven field observers scoured the circle for birds and 4 individuals with feeders made a significant contribution to the results. The good feeders accounted for a quarter of the individual count total.

Twenty seven species of birds were counted, average for the 11 years. Seven hundred and ninety individual birds were found, higher than last year but approximately half of the other previous years.

There were two new species for the count: Kiera Moratz found a Northern Cardinal in St Charles and Gary Martin saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk close to his feeder. Other rare sightings were a Northern Goshawk along the West Arm shore and Kiera found a Bald Eagle at the Lavigne Landfill.

Ten Mourning Doves were found, Cal Osborne and Sandra Arseneau found one north of Lavigne and the other nine were at Gary & Angela Martin's feeder.

The snowshoe/hike led by Chuck Miller found a Black-backed Woodpecker along the Loudon Peatland Trail in the Mashkinonje Provincial Park. This woodpecker has been seen often along this trail.

The only White-breasted Nuthatches were found at two feeders along the West Arm. An American Robin was visiting the Martin's feeder area. Two Northern Shrikes were found one each by the Moratz's and the Martin's. The Moratz's in St Charles and Carmelle Girouard from Lavigne had the only House Sparrows.

The number of Black-capped Chickadees dropped to 226 from a high of 1,053 in 2005. Snow Bunting numbers have also taken a significant decline, from 712 in 2003 to 9 on this count. All the Snow Buntings are coming to the Martin's feeder, where their numbers vary up to 30 individuals.

Finches and old world sparrows have declined. This group numbered 122 this year, whereas other years have been in the 400-500 range. There are seeds on trees but cone bearing trees have few cones. Common Redpolls made up 103 of this year's total. All of the Finches and House Sparrows were found at few locations, not spread over the circle.

Christmas Bird Counts are not only important for science, they are a great reason for getting outside and enjoying nature, then sharing your finds over a nice meal. Everyone goes home happy.



Double-crested Cormorant

Photo submitted by: Nancy Kennedy, Bird watching from our dock

Events

All events meet at the Loudon Entrance,
Hwy 64 1km south of Musky Island Rd.
For information contact: Angela Martin
705-594-1153

Cross the Park Snowshoe

Saturday February 11th at 9:30 am

Earth Day Hike

Sunday April 29th at 9:30 am

AGM and Picnic

Sunday August 19th at 11 am

Barrier Free Trail Opening

Wednesday September 12th at 1 pm

2011 Donors

Moose Bog (\$500)

Chuck Miller

Cottongrass Fen (\$250)

Saenchiur Flechey

Tamarac Swamp (\$100)

Narozanski Realty

Peter Beckett

Cal Osborne & Sandra Arseneau

Bob & Rae-Anne Timony

Andy & Nancy Kennedy

Ted & Grace Price

Star of the North

James McCaw

Muskrat Marsh (\$50)

Colleen & Gerard Carrier

Don & Val McGemsy

Dan & Cendrine Busch

Klaus & Elaine Drobeck

Jim & Madeline Cooper

Pat & Bill Aikenhead

Sheldon & Julia McGregor

Thank you for becoming a Friend

2011 New Members

Mark Fisher

Katherine MacLeod

Tanya Middlebro-Bisset

Narozanski Realty

Sylia Bourre

Linda Weber

Jean Elliot

Brad Frankfurth

Rob VanExan

On Q Renovations

Joan Fryer & Michel Monette

Ron & Carol Dionne

Valarie Scarfone

CONTACT US

We hope you enjoyed our newsletter. To view past editions, visit our website

www.mashkinonje.com

or contact us at:

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Vice President: Dr. Peter Beckett

Secretary: Nicole Wilson

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Park Liaison: Chuck Miller, Ontario Parks
Superintendent

Thank you for being a Friend