

Habitat Conservation Fund Final Report 2013-14 (Young Naturalists Club)

Project Report

(1) project goal and objectives;

The goal of the YNC is to provide positive, educational experiences related to natural history for youth and families. The Club provides natural history knowledge and skills not currently taught in schools—such as wildlife species identification and field guide use. These are fundamental skills for understanding habitat conservation issues. In 2012-13, with the support of Habitat Conservation Fund, the YNC was able to achieve this goal once again over the year.

- **Each YNC chapter hosted monthly meetings** (September to June)
Outcomes: (i) increased knowledge of natural history and wildlife habitat conservation, (ii) development of connections with local naturalists and groups who lead talks and field trips, (iii) a sense of belonging and acceptance amongst a community of peers who share the same keen interest in nature.
- **Each YNC chapter guided monthly field trips** (September to June)
Outcomes: (i) hands-on identification of local flora and fauna, (ii) a sense of comfort and curiosity in the outdoors, (iii) and a desire to help conserve wildlife and wild areas.
- **Opportunities were provided for local adult naturalists to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with the next generation of naturalists at local wildlife areas.** Outcomes: (i) passing on of natural history knowledge from adult naturalists to young naturalists, (ii) youth developed natural history skills while in the field, (iii) youth learned about local wild areas that families can come back and visit again.
- **The connection was made between wildlife observation and conservation.** Outcomes: (i) members learned about the need to first appreciate wildlife, then act in order to conserve wildlife, (ii) members gained some knowledge and resources with which to act on their desire to conserve wildlife, (iii) families were introduced to the topic of wildlife habitat conservation with the aim that discussions (and actions) would continue at home.
- **Showcased local outdoor opportunities to members and families of YNC chapters.** Outcome: i) encouraged families to visit local and accessible natural areas for outdoor recreation and nature appreciation purposes.
- **Increased engagement of YNC chapter members through a new brochure and improved and more interactive website** Outcome: (i) Members have a central location to learn about upcoming YNC events in their community, and in other YNC chapters, (ii) the public can learn about the current and past activities of the YNC and about the organization as a whole (iii) chapters leaders and coordinator distributed brochures and increased local awareness of YNC programming.
- **Created stronger relationships between YNC chapters and local natural history associations** through a joint event bringing together young and adult naturalists through a full weekend of nature programming for youth and adults. Outcomes: (i) stronger relationships between the YNC and adult natural history groups, (ii) additional opportunities for adult naturalists to share their knowledge and passion with youth, (iii) an opportunity for YNC members from different chapters to meet at an annual event.

- **Expanded YNC to include 1 new communities in Berwick NS**

Outcomes: (i) youth and families in these areas will have the opportunity to share in YNC activities

(2) an outline of the work completed;

- Chapter meetings and field trips for 5 chapters coordinated and planned
- Secured funding to support needs of all chapters
- Supported the emergence of 1 NEW chapter in Berwick and another chapter in Sydney will hopefully start up in the Fall
- Provided resources to guest speakers and field trip leaders for their presentations and field trips
- Habitat conservation activities conducted by YNC members
- Provided chapter management by provincial YNC coordinator
- Developed new YNC brochure and website
- Planned and delivered a fantastic weekend of intergenerational nature programming
- Secured funding to support youth and families to attend nature weekend
- Increased capacity for conservation-oriented activities with youth by developing new partnerships with WRWEO and the Nova Scotia Sea School

(3) results

- A variety of engaging field trips and presentations were hosted by all 6 chapters including: visits to the planetarium, visits to the core sample library at DNR, geology of rivers, winter-survival, animals in winter, geocaching, nature-book exploration at local libraries, lichen walk, deadwood walk, beach-combing, geology of Wittenburg, and a variety of local nature hikes (to see more go to <http://nature1st.net/ync/category/field-trip-reports/>).
- Youth and families continued to attend all chapters, including the newest 6th chapter: approximately 300 people were directly involved in YNC activities this year.
- Members continued to enjoy YNC sessions and provided positive feedback (see appendix: two sample surveys attached)
- Coordinator continued to support chapters in 2012-13 and plan for 2014
- New Website launched. Monitoring effects for 2013-14.
- Brochures distributed: chapters leaders appreciated having accessible, streamlined promo materials and reported increased awareness and attendance.

(4) an assessment of achievements and lessons learned, measured against the project goals and objectives;

Our year was highly successful, we met all of our objectives and continued to provide youth and families across Nova Scotia with opportunities to learn about conservation and engage with wilderness activities. Chapter leaders are becoming more well-versed in connecting with presenters and continue to do excellent work organizing, promoting and facilitating activities. As they become more comfortable with all aspects of leadership, chapter leaders are building in more in-depth conservation based activities.

(5) recommendations for follow-up steps to the project.