

MVFN Visit to Queens University Biological Station

Submitted by Mike Macpherson
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On the morning of May 16th, 2004, a beautiful bright spring day, ten MVFN field trippers arrived at the QUBS on Lake Opinicon near Chaffey's Lock. Frank Phelan, the Station Manager, ably described the mandate of the station, which is teaching and research, and with additional comments by Floyd Connors and Leisha Bruinsma, gave us a very good briefing on the kinds of activities that take place at QUBS. Cooperation with other universities was evident as we met researchers from other countries pursuing their studies at the Station.

To show us examples of research being carried out, Laura Bjorgan and Jeff Row introduced us to a beautiful Black Rat snake, (called out from its resting place in a pillow case) and Lana Edwards showed us a painted turtle with an antenna attached to its shell. All of which helped to demonstrate and explain radio telemetry, which is used to help learn more about where and how these animals live and suggest the strategies they use survive in their environment.

Rachel Fraser told us about the very interesting multi-year research she has been pursuing on the golden winged warbler, and the results of interbreeding with the blue winged warbler, which may result in diminishing populations of the former bird.

Jeremy Pfaff, showed us up close in his hand, a song sparrow which had been caught in a mist net, and described some of its fascinating territorial and mating behaviors.

During these presentations, our hosts took time to answer all of our questions, and we got to quiz them even further when we gathered in the Operations Center/ Dining Hall for lunch.

After lunch, with good instructions from our hosts, we embarked upon a walk along the "boardwalk" through the swamp over to Cow Island, seeing along the way a very large snapping turtle, a variety of marsh birds and plants, and a discrete plantation of morels.

To close off the day we drove to the Lindsay Lake trail further along the Opinicon Road. Those of us who had scarcely stretched our legs, and had more time, walked into Lindsay Lake, observing along the way an indigo bunting, scarlet tanagers, and other trilling song birds. Freshly emerging dragonflies were grouped in large numbers on small branches along the path, basking in the sun. We also were hooted at by a barred owl and serenaded by, we believe, a bittern. Best of all we were untroubled by biting insects all day long, a mystery we have not yet been able to explain.

