

The Wood Frog is Losing its Wood

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The Rangers were on a quest in the Avon Peninsula to find the fragrant, delicate white orchid.

A quest is good, because our eyes are open and we are alert. Open eyes makes it easier to find so many other creatures, and enjoy the seasonal changes. This time, we found changes of another sort.

The orchid might be called Ladies' Tresses. There are six types in Nova Scotia, two of them recently discovered. Identification has been tricky. Finding it was not. Shortly after the walk began, it appeared, in all its miniature glory. The flowers are tiny, with three spirals around a short stem.

"That frog has a black

mask on, like Zorro" remarks one of our group members as the little fellow hops to the base of an orchid. We pick it up to look at it closely. It is a wood frog. During the spring breeding season, the males are darker and the 'mask' is less pronounced than in the summer and fall when they are greyish. Three of them could fit in my small hands. Before putting it down, we noticed a beautiful golden line along the edge of the black mask. What an intriguing little creature! I'm glad I finally met one up close. I've been hearing them for years in the spring, and always thought of them as 'laughing frogs'. They make a sound part way between a chuckle and a quack. If you want to hear the sound, check out the Frog Watch site: www.nature-watch.ca/english/frog-

[watch/learn_frogs.asp?Province=ns](http://www.nature-watch.ca/english/frog-watch/learn_frogs.asp?Province=ns). Wood frogs in the Peninsula are not laughing now.

Further along the walk, the changes to the Commons are difficult to ignore. An area where people used to walk, work, and drive freely is now 'out of bounds'. No trespassing signs are springing up. Shaded woodland paths and roads have been turned into rutted, straight, and wide scars. Ponds are now silted up from the road-building erosion. The forested banks home to yellow lady slippers and other species have been trashed. Everyone on the walk felt the trauma on a personal level.

The magical gypsum woods are being opened up and carted off. There is a difference between making a living at harvesting trees over a lifetime in a forest –

which is part of the history of the Peninsula Commons – and a contractor that harvests whole forests in a matter of days.

The Rangers are observing a shift from harvesting to destruction. Why is the middle of the Peninsula being changed so dramatically, when there isn't even a permit to develop it? When there are baseline studies being conducted? The idea of a baseline study is to study an area before it is changed.

The community still has not had an opportunity to get together and properly explore the area, consider all its potentials, learn what it has to offer, and figure out, in turn, what we have to offer back.



(SUBMITTED)

WOOD FROG

This wood frog makes an unusual sound during its active season and is tiny enough to easily fit in one's hand.