

## Nature Discovery Tours kick-off 2015 season

By Sara Gottardi

A small group of dedicated volunteers recently got together at the Bancroft and District Chamber of Commerce for the welcoming annual kick-off ceremony of the Nature Discovery Tours. The group came together to talk about upcoming summer opportunities and different ideas for tours as well as regulars offered through participating groups in the Bancroft area.

The Nature Discovery tours is now in its third year and offers regular tours such as: Forestry, Chimney Swifts, Fish Hatchery and Elk Reintroduction tours, also having a historical mineral tour each year. Every year the amount of people attending varies greatly in participants.

Chair of BASC, Steve Wilkins said, "it's humble beginnings, you have to keep working at this to make it go and grow."

People that are looking for something interesting to take part in in the community have plenty of choices to choose from with the many different tours continuing to grow in the Bancroft area. Wilkins commented on the uniqueness of Bancroft and it being "a Northern town in the South," with all its charms of a Northern lifestyle.

Saying, "We're all about forestry, we're all about woods and waters. We still have trappers active in the area, and logging is still a huge industry," although seemingly a quite hidden industry. There are still trucks that pass in delivering lumber up, down and throughout the town and "til this day should be shown more as it's not only an important factor to one of Bancroft's unique qualities but it's also the largest business to the area.

The BDCC along with partnering organizations have been persistently striving to get people to come out and partake in these informative tours. Looking to devise a way in attracting more visitors from out of town as well as from within it to come out to the tours.

Betty Coutu, ambassador of Bancroft Area Stewardship BASC, and the Field Naturalist Club FNC was present as she is also an expert on guiding the Chimney Swift tours. They're an endangered species and she shared that the University of Queens had discovered chimney swifts in the old buildings chimney. They attempted to block off the chimney swifts not wanting them there, but later realized the birds brilliance and reopened the chimney as it is where the swifts roost and it is not condoned to remove chimney swifts. The chimney "has to be a Masonry or Brick chimney," because, "if it's smooth inside, they can't cling to it," Coutu said and this makes it difficult for them to find places to reside.

Partnered with the BDCC are the Bancroft Field Naturalists Club, North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery, Freymond Lumber and the Bancroft Area Stewardship Council, and "we're talking about two other segments," Wilkins said, also saying that "next year might be the year where we're going to have Maple Syrup and we're also talking about Trapping."

Wilkins described the stewardship council as, "a bunch of diverse sectors from the community," saying, "we all sit down and we network. Joining Forestry talk with Agricultural talk, Naturalist talk, and with all those kinds of groups that are out there, and it really helps to come up with new ideas."

For more information about available tours and tour dates visit the Bancroft and District Chamber of Commerce at: <http://bancroftdistrict.com/> or call: (613) 332-1513.