

Kingston Teen Naturalists – Queen’s Herbarium (November 10, 2018) by Ronan Giguere.

Saturday the tenth of November marked one of the first very cold days of the season with the sun blocked by an overcast sky and a brisk wind that can cut right through layers. Despite this, my-self, Anne, Alexander, Amélie and Elena made the drive up to the Queens Biological Station where we met with Damon. At the lodge we were welcomed by Adriana Lopez Villalobos, the collections and data manager at the biology station, who then gave us a short presentation on what a Herbarium is, and how we were to go about collecting samples. For someone with a love of history and of plants such as myself, I was rather enamoured with the plates that were passed around and looking at these specimens, some of which dated back to the Victorian era as was written on their perfectly hand written information cards.

After the presentation, Adriana showed us how we were to go out into the field and use the plant presses to collect specimens, and what data we would need to record to put on the label later on .After struggling a bit with, and finally conquering the straps that compress and hold the press together, we set out into the cold morning air, and hiked out to Cow Island, an island frequently used for various biological experiments by the students in residence at the station. On the island we collected our specimens, recording our initials, the date, a description of where it was found, and what species we think it is. Damon and I working together collected a goldenrod, a Marginal Wood Fern and a Christmas Fern.

We returned to the lodge with our samples and ate lunch, my own feet gradually warming up as I had not anticipated the cold and had worn runners. After lunch, Adriana showed us the actual Fowler Herbarium in the new Jesse V. Deslauriers Centre for Biology, and we got a look at how all of the 140,000 specimens are organised in the cabinets and how she and some volunteers are working to digitize the entire collection. As the final step in our visit, we got to take samples that had been previously collected and mount them on archival paper following the processes that would be used, in which the specimen is glued to the sheet and a label attached and filled out. As I mentioned before, I am quite a fan of both history and botany, so this was quite a fascinating experience personally, and I believe that every-one else shared in the feelings of being able to go through all the steps ourselves to experience this very tactile side of science.

Many thanks to Adriana for the work she puts into the Herbarium and organising our visit!