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Students get lesson on the environment

BY SAM MCNEISH

Amherst Daily News

AMHERST – Many people have spent time exploring the beauty of the Bay of Fundy during a mid-summer stroll.

Captivated by the beauty of the surroundings, people likely have not considered what a third-year environmental studies student at Mount Allison University did during a visit to a remote part of this area recently.

Ben Phillips, a double major student just completing his third year of studies discovered what is believed to be the oldest recorded red spruce tree on the planet.

He recounted his story for Grade 7 science students at E.B. Chandler Junior High School Wednesday.

"I was in the area doing some research and looking for trees that I thought would be around 300 years old," he said.

"I noticed this one tree because of the colour of the bark. It was shiny so I figured it was around 300 years old," he added.

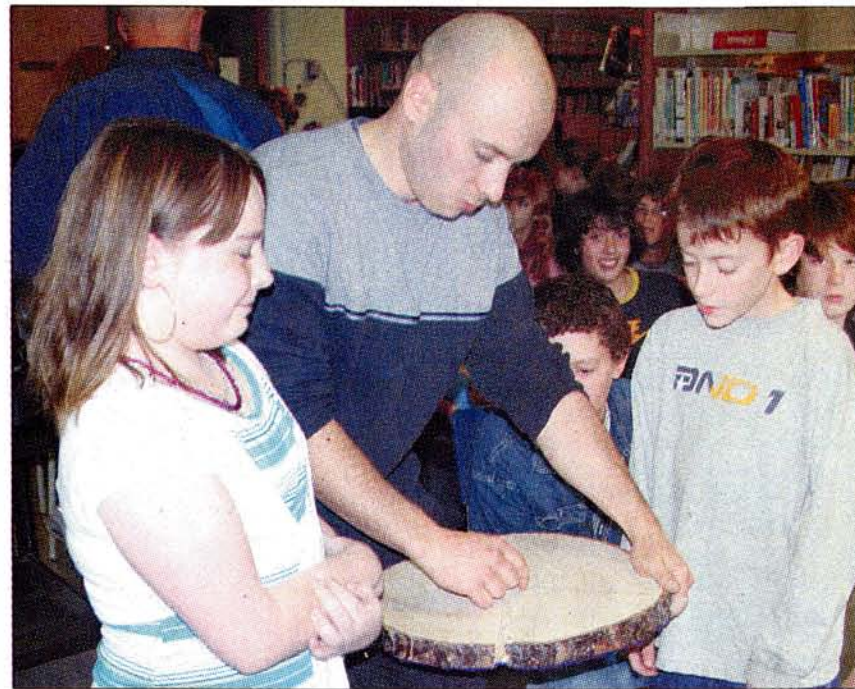
Phillips used a special tool to take a core sample to count the rings on the tree and see exactly how old it was. He took the sample back to the lab and was able to count 445 rings under a special microscope.

This was 40-years older than the previous oldest tree, a red spruce discovered in New Hampshire.

His research team estimated the tree took root in 1560.

Finding a tree of this nature and age is unheard of in Atlantic Canada because of the logging industry that has been prevalent here for centuries.

"We were lucky that this is a pro-



SAM MCNEISH – AMHERST DAILY NEWS

STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT NATURE – Ben Phillips, a double major student in geography and environmental studies at Mount Allison University, has the distinction of having found the oldest recorded red spruce tree in existence. Phillips paid a visit to E.B. Chandler Junior High School on Wednesday to speak to science classes about his discovery. He is shown here with Grade 7 students Caitlin Carter and Harley Estabrooks.

tected wildlife area, that is why the tree was able to survive this long"; he said.

"There are no roads leading in to the area and this keeps people from destroying the habitat," he added.

Phillips said only three people know the location of the tree and he plans on keep it that way for preservation purposes. He said he didn't want people in walking around the area and disturbing the eco-system that has helped maintain the growth for nearly four and a half centuries.

Phillips says the record-holding tree is small, only approximately 30 centimetres in diameter, and scraggly looking.

During his extensive presentation, Phillips outlined his findings and what it means to him to help conserve a natural habitat, something he hopes to continue doing after graduation.

Students were then given an opportunity to ask him questions pertaining to his discovery.

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