



# In With the Tide

Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association Newsletter

Volume 3 Issue 1

## Discovery Centre Association Thinking SPRING

-by Roger Outhouse



Snowdrops on March 13, 2011– always a sign of Spring!

As the golden promise of Spring triggers our thoughts to another growing season the Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association is getting its “to do list” in order. Anticipated achievements:

1. We await the new Destination Southwest Nova guides to our area. Our submissions to edit this 2011 edition along with other groups have hopefully made some positive corrections and additions to the

visitors guide.

2. The eight interpretive panels for plant interpretation along the Balancing Rock Trail should be ready soon and we expect to have them installed prior to the opening this spring.

3. Likewise our work with the Municipality of Digby and the Digby Area Tourism Association should soon be complete and we should see an 8’ x 4’ double sided sign marking the location for the world famous Balancing Rock Trail. In addition four 4’ x 2’ way finding signs will be installed along Digby Neck and Islands to help encourage and assist visitors in

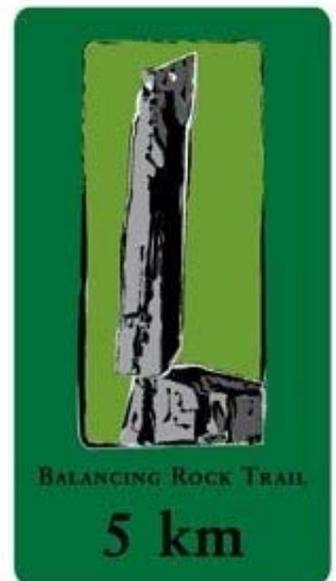
finding our number one land based attraction.

4. Our GOMI Team will be preparing for the weekend spring GOMI Conference in Shelburne and the week long Summer Conference in Newburyport, Mass. These are great opportunities for our Gulf of Maine Institute youth teams from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and New England to learn with and from each other as we take on projects to preserve the Gulf of Maine watershed.
5. Take part in working with environmental education by involving youth in field trips.

6. We have been

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Sample sign marking to the Balancing Rock

## Thinking SPRING, continued

cooperating with Annapolis-Digby Economic Development Agency in its Tourism Kiosk Project and we hopefully will see local kiosks in our area soon. The Municipality of Digby has been very supportive of the work. These stand alone kiosks will offer visitor information on a 24 hour seven days a week basis. They should be particularly valuable assets in the early and

### Sample Interpretive Panel



**SKUNK CABBAGE**  
*(Symplocarpus Foetidus)*

One of the special plants you will see growing in this damp environment is the Broad-Leaved Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus Foetidus*). The name we have given it reflects a smell that we find none too attractive, but it is a scent that attracts the first insects of spring. The Skunk Cabbage is one of the earliest signs of winter's end, for its chemistry can actually thaw the ground and allow it to send up a green spear with its blossom when snow is still on the ground and before its great leaves emerge. The plant can be poisonous, but if prepared carefully has important medicinal properties. The Mi'kmaq people used its leaves for preventing epileptic seizures, skin ailments and diabetes. Its root when dried and ground was even used as a deodorant!

Even in late winter their strange flowers break through the soil.

Although these broad-leafed plants are common on Long Island they are rare elsewhere in Nova Scotia. Their crushed leaves do smell like a real skunk.

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TIVERTON BOARD OF TRADE  
FREEPORT COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION



Kara Barnaby is a graduate of Islands Consolidated School and NSCC's Graphic Design Program. She expresses both personal and professional pride in her designs for the Balancing Rock Trail interpretive panels and the road signage for this important attraction. If you or your group would like to find out more about this talented young entrepreneur check out her website

[www.barnabygraphicdesign.com](http://www.barnabygraphicdesign.com) or contact her by phone (902) 249-0599 or

*Digby County is enjoying a wonderful support network of local professionals with interests in the environment.*

The Digby Area Tourism Association has hired Morgan Hempen as their Phase II coordinator. Her role will be to help the implementation of this project for better promotion signage and other efforts to enhance visitation to the "Coastlines and Cultures" of our region. Balancing Rock, Gilberts Cove and Point Prim are just some of target areas. Morgan indicates that she looks forward to working with the communities as she takes on the duties of her new position. Congratulations Morgan and we wish you great success.



## Creature of the Cove –the European Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

-by Roger Outhouse

As we watch the migrating species of birds head to warmer home wintering grounds we can be sure that the European Starling is not going to be among them as its original home is Eurasia and North Africa. Humans introduced the Starling to the New World successfully with 180 birds released in New York's Central Park. By the 1930's they had expanded their range as far north as the Maritime Provinces. Today

shaped (in flight), short-tailed birds that often fly in large flocks that can number in the thousands. Like shorebirds the flock expands and contracts in a wild and unpredictable manner that confuses and frustrates other winged predators. The brief description above would make one wonder why we would want such neighbours to begin with. Apparently the upper crust of society decided that a bird that is part of Shakespearian

Despite these negative implications scientists and some farmers recognize that Starlings eliminate vast numbers of insect pests.

Their extensive diet can include snails, worms, millipedes, beetles, grasshoppers, flies, caterpillars, spiders, fruits, berries, grains, seeds, and garbage. Unlike most birds they are able to "gape" for food. That simply means that they have strong muscles for forcing



Two adult Starlings on the right forage for food while their young offspring on the left watch and learn.

their numbers are estimated at over 200 million and they reside through much of North America from Alaska to the Atlantic where they live in cities, parks, farms, open groves, fields and open country.

European starlings (smaller than an American Robin) have black iridescent bodies with yellow bills in summer but this changes to a black with white speckled body and brown bill in winter. They are aggressive, noisy, triangular-

literature would be a fine addition to American culture. Today many now consider them a nuisance bird that leaves large quantities of foul wastes and competes with species of native birds for food and habitat including endangered ones such as the Eastern Bluebird and Wood Duck.

Their droppings have been known to carry numerous diseases which can infect humans and animals and many farmers consider them an enemy as they ravage crops.

their beaks open when they thrust them into the ground searching for food. This highly successful hunting technique is probably made even better by the fact that Starlings possess binocular vision and are one of the few birds that have a good sense of smell. This heightened sense is also evident as courting males have been observed presenting females with fragrant bouquets of flowers such as lavender.

## Creature of the Cove, continued

Their mating habits are simple. Typically a male and female partner for only a single season and have one brood although some males will seek a second mate during a given season. The nests are made of grass and twigs, lined with feathers and plant materials and constructed in a tree or cavity of a building. Usually 4 to 6 eggs are laid and they hatch in two weeks. After three weeks of feeding in the nest they are ready to follow the adults and

forage for food.

While most of us may think of the European Starling as just a common bird there are some tidbits you should know. Their Latin name (*Sturnus vulgaris*) refers to “little stars” which appear as tiny white speckled patterns which so prominently cover their body in winter months. This bird is closely related to Mina Birds, Mockingbirds and Catbirds and has a wonderful voice range. They can make clear

whistles, bill rattles, chuckles, creaks, chirps, squeaks and even a “wolf whistle” which has probably made some startled humans blush as they look around for an admirer who has vanished. They can also mimic cats, dogs and even emergency sirens.

Whether you consider them good or bad, European Starlings are a perfect example of what can happen because someone thinks importing and releasing a specie is a good idea; like Pandora’s Box,

## 24 Visitors for Two Weeks in February!

By Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly

They arrived in the early morning, just before dawn in early February. I was out shoveling the freshly fallen snow when I heard their chatter. Their voices were melodic and I stopped to listen. The beautiful sounds were coming from below the bird feeder about seven metres away from me. I stood still knowing this was a song I had not heard before. Because of the morning darkness I could only see flashes of white as they danced and conversed.

It was another two days before I met them in daylight (thanks to a storm that kept us home from school). They arrived in such a beautiful synchronized flight pattern one would think they had choreographed it. They landed on the wire above me, all facing in the same direction. I marveled at their beauty. I counted

twenty-four birds in pristine white and black tuxedos. I wanted to run in to get my bird book but I also wanted to stay still and admire them. I hoped they would stay for a while.

I checked my bird book and conferred with Aunt Mabel, my neighbour and owner of the three feeders these birds were enjoying, who also had her bird book out. They were male snow buntings. They came to the feeders twice a day for a two-week period. Every time I saw them, I simply stood and watched the most amazing show. Never once did I think to get a camera! One morning I watched them gracefully land on Aunt Mabel’s roof. They lined up one by one then, one at a time, they walked to the corner of the roof and hopped over to the telephone line directly above the bird feeder. It was

amazing to watch this routine in perfect time as each made its hop.

They disappeared by the end of the second week of February and we sure did miss them. I don’t know if they heard us calling for them to come back but one Saturday at the end of the month, they came back! Maybe it was a new group that had heard about the great food at our feeders. They stayed just for the day, just to say, “Hello,” and enjoy a meal before their return home to the Arctic to meet up with their female partners and enjoy their summer in the land of the midnight sun.

I sure hope they use the same travel route next winter. I will try to stop admiring them long enough to take a picture.

## Share a Passion for the Fundy With GAEL Tours

By Greg Turner, Owner/Guide

Several years ago, I began thinking about what I might do when I retire from teaching. For years, as part of the teaching, I have been taking students to the outdoor classroom including trips to the Fundy shore, the forest, lakes, streams and rivers. One of my former teachers, co-worker and good friend, Churchill Page, always took students to the shore and to Keji. Without question, his enthusiasm influenced me in my career and led me into the rewarding experience of taking students

outside. Churchill and I still team up for the annual DRHS Biology 12 canoe trip to Keji.

In the early 1990s, Churchill started taking locals and visitors to the shoreline during Digby Scallop Days. I joined him in the mid 1990s and ever since we have led the annual Seaside Ramble to showcase the Bay of Fundy tides,



Willing Waders. Visitors from the Halifax area wade the waters of the incoming tide near Seawall on St. Mary's Bay, a perfect setting for observing moon snails, quahogs and toad crabs in action.

the geology of the area and the flora and fauna of the rocky shore. It has been a wonderful experience, teaching and learning in such a remarkable environment with the Bay of Fundy as a backdrop. We have interacted with people from all over the world who are awestruck by the incredible scenery and marvel at the diversity of life along the shore.

In addition to natural history, I have always been interested in local history and culture. When I taught Oceans, I had my students photograph the present waterfront of Digby and then research

Praising the plankton. The low tide mark at Point Prim provides the setting for a closer look at some

what it was like throughout the last century and document the changes. We have a rich local history and diverse culture going back hundreds of years, with the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, Planters, and Loyalists all tied in some way to the sea.

And so, it seemed a natural transition to go from the classroom at DRHS into the realm of teaching visitors about the natural history, culture and the heritage of our area. The idea of GAEL Tours rose from the desire to keep teaching, but in a different classroom with a new crop of "students" each day.

I decided to showcase the heritage and culture with a guided walking tour of Digby called, Stones, Steeples, Ships and Seafood.





With a bed of dulse, kelp and Irish moss in the background, an excited visitor to Point Prim hauls in a tow of plankton.

shoreline ecosystems in the world. As part of the tour, we see the effects of the tidal range on the plants and animals, use a plankton net to collect and observe plankton, search for the three types of periwinkles, watch barnacles in a feeding frenzy, feel the hundreds of tube feet of a starfish and sample edible seaweeds. We often see seals feeding among the kelp beds in the subtidal zones and white-sided dolphins or harbour porpoises frolicking just offshore. Northern

Features include the waterfront, shipbuilding of the past, fisherman's wharf and fishing tales, seafood sampling at the local fish market, historic buildings (including Trinity Anglican Church) and Admiral Digby Museum.

To highlight our natural history, I developed an experience called Plankton, Periwinkles and Predators. This little tour can be tailored to fit any part of the Fundy shore, Annapolis Basin or St. Mary's Bay. With a nine metre tidal range, our rocky promontories offer a look into one of the most diverse

gannets diving for fish and eider ducks in the surf are occasionally seen. There is something magical about being on the rocks in a fog-shrouded landscape when the sun finally breaks through, the fog lifts

and the Bay of Fundy in all its beauty is revealed.

A package is also offered that includes exploring the shore in the morning, lunch in East Ferry and whale watching with Petit Passage Whale Watch in the afternoon. This is an excellent opportunity to explore the natural history from the tiny, microscopic plankton, up the food chain to the great whales - a complete Bay of Fundy experience.

Gael Tours offered the walking tour of Digby and the shoreline excursions along the Bay of Fundy for the first time last summer. Visitors came from all over North America, spanned all ages and all had one thing in common; they were enthralled with the beauty of our area. In anticipation of meeting new visitors (and locals too), we are looking forward to the 2011

## **Gael Tours**

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## GOMI – A Great Group!

During the fall, the Gulf of Maine Institute sent out a survey to youth who were and are still involved with its work. I hope that by reading the survey response below you will better understand why the Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association is so interested in helping our own GOMI Digby Neck & Islands Team take an active role with this excellent organization. – Roger Outhouse

Posted: 06 Nov 2010 02:35 PM PDT  
Preliminary results from a recently conducted survey of GOMI alumni show that the program has had a powerful effect not just on environmental awareness, but personal development as well. – Note from GOMI President John Terry

The survey responses below are from a former member of the Newburyport Team who is currently a sophomore at Emmanuel College in Boston, MA completing a double major in Writing/Literature and Clinical Psychology.

### **Q. What effect, if any, did GOMI have on you?**

*GOMI was an extremely important experience for me. The education I received from GOMI was unlike any other that could have been offered in the normal school system. It was very hands on (an extremely effective*

*tactic in educating about environmental awareness) and exposed me to intelligent, strong, and passionate people who were patient in sharing their knowledge. GOMI taught me many things, not only about the environment, but also about teamwork, communication, perseverance, and also leadership. My experience with GOMI shaped me as a professional, articulate, and mature individual. It has connected me to my community, establishing a role not only locally, but also globally. Although I have not chosen to pursue a career focused on environmental studies, it will always be a part of my life, thanks to the people I have met and the knowledge I have acquired through GOMI.*

### **Q. What was special/unique about your GOMI experience?**

*Through GOMI, another teammate and I were able to appear and be interviewed on the Morning Show. I, along with my teammates, have been recognized locally for our work and Emmanuel College has also recognized the work I have done with GOMI. My experience with GOMI also bonded me with my teammates in a way that even now as we are all pursuing different dreams and educations across the country, are able to stay in touch and support each other.*

### **Q. What are GOMI's most attractive qualities/characteristics?**

*I believe that GOMI is an extremely unique learning experience. I cannot even begin to thank all of the amazingly talented and passionate individuals that I have met through GOMI. The most important quality is that the adults involved with GOMI treat and interact with the students as if they were functioning professionals; they all treated me with immense respect and it made me even more eager to learn and work with them. The hands-on fieldwork was also effective, for the visual representations for environmental work cannot be equally replicated in a classroom; it is the tangibility that makes the impact stronger.*

### **Q. Has involvement changed your thinking about the environment and how to protect it?**

*GOMI has transformed environmental issues from stories that you hear on the news to actual, existing materials that I can bond and reflect on. GOMI has made me extremely aware, and I will always be protective of our*



Crocus on March 13, 2011: yes, Spring is here!

## More Revelations at Jerome's Rock

By Shealee Newman



January 1, 2011: Winter storms reveal there is more to Jerome's Rock than most residents remember.

After a couple of winter storms in late December and early January, I noticed a picture on the internet of what had happened to Sandy Cove Beach on the Bay of Fundy side. Curious, I decided to check things out for myself. Imagine my surprise when I saw that Jerome's Rock had become Jerome's Rocks.

So much of the beach had been washed out that the waves were reaching to the cliff side. The grasslands at the top of the beach had been worn away, and the beach itself had become completely flat. Where I would have laid my towel at high tide to sit in the sun, was now completely covered in water.

I was surprised to see how large Jerome's Rock actually was. Buried deep

Much of the beach had eroded to the tree line.



beneath the sand around the Rock there were many other large rocks that had been exposed by the erosion of the beach. It was fascinating to think that I was walking on rocks that haven't seen the light of day in many, many years.

When I saw this, it made me wonder what caused this change to the beach that has been the same since I can remember. Many



Standing beside the original Jerome's Rock

one we've got.



Shealee is a grade 11 student at Islands Consolidated School and a member of the Island's-Digby Neck GOMI Team.

**Editor's note about Jerome's Rock:**

During the summer of 1850, a strange ship was spotted just offshore in Sandy Cove on the Bay of Fundy. The following morning, a legless man was found seated against the large rock that jutted out of the beach sand. The man did not speak and was carried to a local home. Many efforts were made to communicate with him. The one sound he uttered sounded like, 'Jerome' and hence this became his name. The rock on the beach became known as Jerome's Rock. Jerome lived in almost complete silence until the summer of 1908, almost 47 years after being found on the shore of Sandy Cove. Jerome's origins remain a mystery.

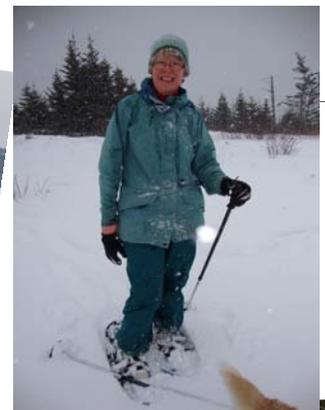
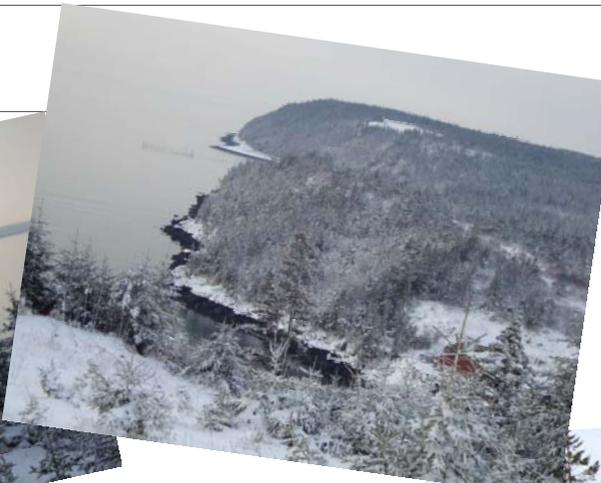
For more information about Jerome, visit:

<http://www.digbyneckinstories.com/STORIES/JEROME.HTM>

<http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/sites/jerome/suites/souvenir/3532en.html>

**A Fitting Farewell**

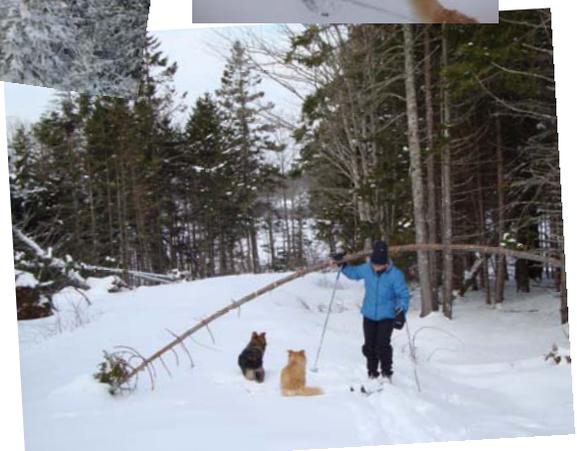
By Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly



We can't welcome in Spring without a look back at the wonderful winter we had. Actually, it really was only a month long. The snow came in February and it was a great month to enjoy our environment by bird watching, skating, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. I liked not having to leave the community to enjoy these activities.

bright sunny days, skied on and around Lake Midway and snowshoed over to the Bay of Fundy from Lake Midway. I wished for more days like these!

I snowshoed up Eastern Head in Little River on a couple of



1. Across St. Mary's Bay from Eastern Head
2. Mouth of Little River from Eastern Head
3. Anna-Marie on snow shoes
4. Skiing around Lake Midway
5. Bay of Fundy



Our Fundy,  
Our Future

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**More signs of Spring:**

A bluebird was sighted by two people on different days near Robicheau's fish plant in Lake Midway during March Break.

A lone Robin was seen on March 16th in Little River.

Five deer have been mowing my lawn, and my bushes, and my garlic... for the past two weeks. One was seen balancing on its hind legs to eat out of the bird feeder!

A cardinal has been singing sweetly in Little River.

Bay of Fundy  
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Do you count five?

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