



In With the Tide

Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association Newsletter

Volume 2 Issue 1

CLEAN NOVA SCOTIA SWEEPS COUNTY

By Roger Outhouse

Over the past winter months the Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association has enjoyed working with Clean Nova Scotia, Digby Municipality, Town of Digby, Islands Consolidated School and local businesses to introduce the province wide DriveWiser program to Digby County. On Feb. 10th Therese Bombardier and Kevin Harrison led presentations and discussions aimed to equip young drivers in Grades 11 and 12 with the knowledge of how they can reduce fuel consumption, save money, and create a healthier environment. To emphasize this challenge ICS staff member Jodi Cossaboom-Webster and senior student Lorena Howard became experimental vehicle drivers to test out their new skill set on the



Senior student Lorena Howard getting last minute instructions from Clean Nova Scotia's Kevin Harrison as she prepares for the DriveWiser fuel consumption test drive.

highway. Lorena turned out to be efficient in both her pre and post trials showing excellent fuel consumption. Jodi showed a much improved mileage result on her second run and commented on how she had learned a num-

ber of good things that improved her results. A DriveWiser kiosk was also placed in the school which educated viewers about the issues surrounding the need to reduce CO₂ emissions and keep our planet healthier.

Meanwhile, Clean N.S. staff member, Cyndi Fraser, made several presentations to students from primary to grade six on



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Clean Nova Scotia presenter, Cyndi Fraser, helping Primary and Grade One ICS students understand about climate change.

Clean Nova Scotia, Continued

global climate change and how they could make an important contribution by thoughtful actions like making sure lights and appliances are turned off whenever possible. The message was one that by acting together we can make a difference. Teaching staff were very pleased with the elementary presentations commenting that the presenter was very skilled in working with the young students and involving them in a wide variety of great activities.



Kevin Ellis was very pleased to support the DriveWiser Program - hosting the kiosk for a week, displaying brochures to inform drivers how they can become involved and displaying Idle Free signs.



The Clean N.S. Team wants to thank the students and staff of Islands Consolidated for allowing them the opportunity to do the presentations and congratulate them on being such great participants. They especially want to thank principal Scott Webster and teacher Linda Ford for organizing the event and making them feel so welcome! As a parting gift they left signs for all three schools on the Neck and Islands reminding drivers to turn off their vehicles to save both fuel

and money. Please try to show our youth that you care by respecting the signs.

All car dealerships in the county displayed the kiosk and distributed educational brochures to assist in the program. Many businesses now display Idle Free signs to encourage public support.



CREATURE OF THE COVE - BRANT (*Branta bernicla*)

By Roger Outhouse

Sometimes nature can inspire by simply beholding its grandeur. The Brant that inhabits the Atlantic can do just that. Whether you are standing on the shoreline looking out over waves of hundreds of flying Brant or standing on mudflats when a large flock goes barely over your head with the harsh “c-c-cronk” sound and the loud whoosh of their wings beating you have a powerful sense of becoming part of the wild kingdom. The South Shore of Nova Scotia has created a special event featuring this spectacular sight.

This small member of the goose family is barely larger than a Mallard Duck but it has a fascinating story of survival through adaptation. People in this region used to hunt them as food until a major parasitic protozoan killed off nearly 90% of their wintering ground food supply back in the 1930s. They had to make a popu-

lation comeback and until this day, it is illegal to hunt them in Atlantic Canada.

The coloration of birds is often an important part of their survival. Male Brant are slightly larger but both sexes are otherwise identical - dark brown bodies, stubby black bill, black head and neck, pale white belly and white patches on the side of the neck. This all makes sense when you need camouflage along the mudflats and salt marsh estuaries in winter and in summer when they are raising their young on the melted tundra of the north.

Imagine flying 7,000 miles from New Jersey, New York to above the Arctic Circle to produce offspring. They migrate from the wintering grounds between March and June so that

their arrival on the northern tundra coincides with the melting snow. If the snow has not melted, the female has the ability to reabsorb her eggs back into her body for nutrition (process known as atresia) thus allowing her to wait before creating and laying fresh eggs in the nest. This is vital because they need to conserve all energy for successful nesting as there is little available food on the tundra.

The female builds the nest of grass lined with down feathers, usually on a raised area of small islands in the midst of tundra ponds. She alone incubates the eggs for about 26 days while lying with head, neck and backs flattened to the tundra so as to blend in with their surroundings and avoiding predators. Once the

Brant generally feed at low tide and rest at high water but the large amounts of mudflats and vegetation exposed in the Bay of Fundy create a sort of paradise as you can see by these grazing adults.



Creature of the Cove, continued

creamy white eggs hatch (up to seven laid) the male and female protect the young goslings. The family walks around with the male leading the young and the female guards the rear of the line.

The young will feed on marine invertebrates, mosquito larvae and plants but as they get older their diet will be almost totally composed of vegetation including eel grass, sea lettuce, widgeon grass and in recent decades they have included commercial grass and winter planted grains. At one time eel grass was their dominant food source but after the blight which nearly destroyed this plant the Brant learned that it was possible

to fly inland for feeding on grains and grass cultivated by humans.

Years ago, local hunters remarked how these birds were wonderful on the island dinner tables when they arrived from the grain fields of the Carolinas and how disgusting the meat became after they dined on the green marine vegetation for just a few days.

When the birds were solely along the coastal areas they would feed at low water and rest at high water. It is interesting to note that even now when they fly inland to feed in fields they will do so at low tide and return to coastal waters at high tide to rest. Because these birds spend so little time

away from salt water during much of their life they have developed an important gland which allows them to drink salt water and eliminate the salt so they can survive.

Brant are an example of how a threatened population can adapt to tough times and with a little assistance from humans, make a true comeback. Currently the species is doing well but the greatest threat now comes from man-made industrialization and pollution. There is a real message of hope from the Brant. Mother Nature has ways of dealing with adversity and just maybe we can help make that difference!



Photo of a raft of black and white male and all brown female Common Eiders taken from the deck of the Petite Princess ferry crossing Petite Passage. There are hundreds of these birds at this location this time of year and they show no fear of the approaching ferry; perfect for photographers.



This is a great photo of the Fundy View Trail entrance in Freeport. Two Turkey Vultures were waiting to greet visitors. The trail has survived the winter and is in good shape for walking. Anyone walking the trail having any sightings of wildlife (mammals, birds, reptiles or amphibians) please give us an email at righthouse@cswireless.ca or phone Roger Outhouse at 839-2068 so we can keep track of the watchable wildlife in the area.

The Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association maintains membership with the Digby Area Board of Trade and participated in a recent meeting on March 18th. Our specific purpose was to explain our Association's current efforts to develop projects in the area and to present information on tourism kiosks to the Board of Trade. It was a pleasant evening and it was exciting to hear about the work and considerations being undertaken by this active group of volunteers. The wide range of involvements from ferries to immigration is impressive and it is suffice to say we feel strongly that by working with groups that have the community at heart we can make a real difference.



What an opportunity!

Digby Regional High Envirothon student and resident of Little River on Digby Neck, Kayla Tidd, will be spending 4 days on HMCS Oriole-Canada off the coast of British Columbia. Kayla, a grade 12 student, will head to Vancouver on March 28. We look forward to reading about her adventure in our next issue.



Photo from:
<http://www.fishermansre-sortmarina.com/images/oriole.jpg>

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