

In With the Tide

The Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association Newsletter



Our Fundy-Our Future

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Something New to Welcome Spring! By Kathleen Gidney and Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly

After a brief burst of cold in early December, Winter was a no show on Digby Neck and Islands. With no snow to shovel and many gloomy, wet and windy days, some residents began dreaming of warmer days and colourful gardens. A new club sprang into action! The Digby Neck and Islands Garden Club held its first meeting in February at the Digby Neck Fire Hall and the members didn't waste any time coming up with special meeting and project ideas.

sites for this unusual type of garden adventure.

Within a few weeks, the club was planning its first community garden- a "butterfly garden" around the church bell in Centreville, on Trout Cove Road, just below Highway 217. It is visible from the highway, so stop and take a look. Three work-days were set up and teams of no more than 5 set to work, clearing, sifting and planting. And, voilà, a garden is planted and ready to grow to welcome butterflies and visitors to the spot.

Check out the Digby Neck and Islands Garden Club Face Book page to find out what the group will be up to next.

The club's inaugural gardening event brought together new club members, local residents and Bridgetown Garden Club members on March 14th to hear Gini Proulx share her photos and experience in building a "rain garden". Gini's wealth of knowledge and her desire to share as much of it as possible, made the afternoon with her truly a gift to us all. No doubt, many participants were out in the days to follow looking at green spaces and selecting



Butterfly Garden day 1 and day 2. Photos by Susan Donker-voort



Butterfly Garden Day 3: getting the plants into the ground!

Sharing the Outdoors Safely During a Pandemic

By Jonathan Riley, Municipality of Digby Trails Coordinator

I want to put down some thoughts on being outdoors safely during a pandemic, but I worry, whatever I write will be out of date before you can read it – things have been changing quickly and everything these past few months has been truly unprecedented.

Some things never change – we know for example, pandemic or no pandemic, that the outdoors and nature are important for our physical and mental well-being. Gardening at home is a great way to get your daily dose of sunshine and fresh air and probably isn't too different than it ever was.

And luckily, we do have lots of wide-open spaces around us for walking, running, biking and exploring. I find once I'm out there on the trails and in the woods, life is pretty darn close to normal.

There are a few things to think about though. By far, the most important thing we can do as individuals, in any situation, is always to treat others with kindness, compassion and respect. With that in mind, whatever your personal thoughts are on the pandemic and the various responses from government, it is essential to keep in mind that for

many people this is a very scary and stressful time. Staying 2 metres (six feet) away from others may feel strange, but it is the best way to show you care. A smile and a friendly wave go a long way. Wash your hands before leaving the house and immediately upon returning home and if you're sick or not feeling well, you should stay at home and rest up. If when you're on the trail, you have to cough or sneeze, do so into your elbow.

How to be Safe Outside
(during a pandemic)

Prioritize the health of others
The COVID-19 pandemic is life and death for some people. Please keep that in mind when you are outside.

Go outside, cautiously
Don't go outside if you are sick. Keep a safe distance from others and avoid busy areas. Wash your hands frequently. Follow Public Health guidelines.

Stay close to home
The further you travel, the more potential you have to spread the illness. Stick as close to home as possible.

Be extra careful
This is not the time to take big risks and get injured. Our health care system is in danger of being overwhelmed. Play extra safe so you don't add to the burden.

Respect closures and special directions
Some facilities may be temporarily closed and others may have signage explaining new usage rules. Please respect these rules and follow all guidelines from Public Health so we can keep trails and other facilities open.

www.digbytrails.ca

Wearing a mask is another measure that may feel strange at first. Most of the time on Digby's relatively quiet trails, we aren't going to need one. But this is something our leaders are recommending; and we should think about slipping them on at least at trailheads or when we encounter others on the trail.

Although restrictions are easing, it is still important to remain as close to home as possible. The further you travel, the more

potential you have to encounter or to spread the illness. Besides, we have lots of great trails and open spaces to choose from right here in the Digby area. Given all the choices we have, if you do arrive at a trailhead and find it full of people or cars, consider heading to another less busy location for your walk or run.

And along the same lines, this is not the time for big risks or extreme adventures – stay well within your “comfort zone” or “competency zone”. We need as much as possible to avoid injuries or rescues that could add an unnecessary burden to our health care system or put first responders at risk.

In Digby County we didn't close any trails except Balancing Rock (and that has since reopened). However, if officials get the impression that people aren't respecting Public Health guidelines, they could close parks and trails again. By making some small adjustments, respecting closures, special directions and current Public Health guidelines, you are doing your part to keep trails and parks open – not to mention keeping yourself and others safe.

For more information on where to hike, and what's open and what's closed, check out www.digbytrails.ca.

Creature of the Cove – Northern Flicker (Colaptes auratus)

Photos and article by Roger Outhouse

This mid-size woodpecker is a highly decorated representative of the bird kingdom. It catches the eye with a spotted breast, black lines on the back, a black bib, red on the head and a white rump which flashes on every wing beat as it flies past. They are found in all the provinces but in winter most migrate closer to the Canada - US border or beyond. They are most at home residing in mature forest for roosting (sleeping) and nesting. These habitat areas must also be close to fields, parks, roadsides, golf courses, cemeteries or any place that supports low plant growth or shrubs.



Unlike most woodpeckers the Northern Flicker needs to hop around on the ground where it spends most of its time eating ants; an examination of one bird's stomach contents produced in excess of 3,000 ants. They use their long bills to pound deep into the ground to locate nests and feed using their tongues which dart out 5 cm (2 inches) beyond the tip of their bills. Scientists maintain that this bird is an important controlling factor of ant and beetle populations. Additional items on the animal menu include flies, butterflies, moths, and snails. Their plant foods are berries and seeds consisting of poison oak,

poison ivy, dogwood, sumac, thistle, wild cherry, bayberries, elderberries, raspberries, sunflower and thistle.

In the Spring breeding season, the birds pair off and stay in monogamous relationships. At times two rival males may put on a "sparring" display while the female watches. They stand face to face on a tree branch with bills pointed upward and their heads bobbing up and down while repeatedly tracing a figure eight in the air. At the same time; they make a rhythmic "wika" call. One makes the grade and the dejected loser goes in search of another mate; not sure what rates best with the female.



Next the happy couple selects an abandoned hole in a tree both using their powerful bills to hammer out a deep cavity in the tree trunk or hydro pole. The holes are about 13 - 16 inches deep and are usually 6 - 15 feet off the ground. They have also been known to nest in old burrows made by a Bank Swallow or Belted Kingfisher.

The female lays between 5-8 white eggs that hatch within two weeks and two weeks later the young are ready to leave the nest. Both

parents feed the nestlings. These holes also provide breeding sites or resting areas for other birds as well and thus the Flicker contributes to breeding populations of other bird species. In addition, the carved-out excavations promote spaces for insect species and spiders to live. These in turn become excellent prey for breeding birds who feed this vitally high protein food to millions of young hatchlings.

As you can see the Northern Flicker is more than just a "pretty bird" as it helps maintain the balance in nature and promote breeding habitats for other wildlife species.

So, what do we need to know? While they are not endangered the population has suffered a dramatic drop in numbers everywhere over recent decades. Some reasons suggested include; loss of mature forest habitat, pesticides reducing food supply, and removal of dead and dying trees which are choice nesting sites for this specie. Take a second thought before removing an old tree with nest holes in the trunk as many Flickers return to the same sites in following years and those abandoned become homes for other wildlife.

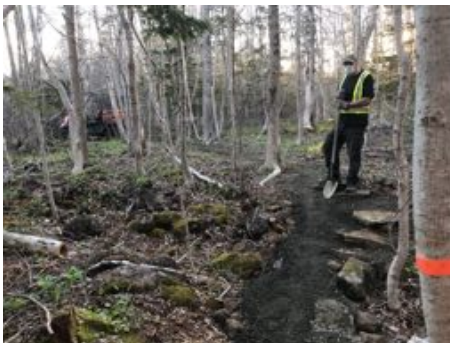
The photos of this female Northern Flicker show the perfect side profile and frontal views while one shows that they are real diggers for food as they dive right in with that long bill. As I took the photos in early May I was impressed with this energetic approach to Spring 2020!

Trail Work is Underway at Van Tassel Lake

By Jonathan Riley, Municipality of Digby Trails Coordinator

The Van Tassel Lake trails should be easier to find, easier to walk and easier to navigate by the end of this summer. With restrictions finally easing, volunteers who look after the trails have started work, with adjustments for COVID-19, on a variety of little projects that should add up to huge improvements for the trail just off the Culloden Road atop Mount Pleasant.

Over the last few years, volunteers have cleared about 6km of single-track trail (not including all the service roads). The main trail makes a 3.5km loop around the lake, with a spur branching off to a small set of “waterfalls” known as the Cascades, and another to the look off. From the look off, you have a breathtaking view out over the upland forest, the lower lake and all the way to Conway, Marshalltown and Smith’s Cove.



John Lefebvre of the Van Tassel Lake Trails Association has been part of volunteer efforts to improve the trails with adjustments for COVID-19.

This year the volunteers have begun by adding rock and

gravel to some of the trail’s wetter and softer stretches and building small bridges and boardwalks over streams and wetlands. The association doesn’t intend to smooth out the whole trail – lots of stretches will have roots and rocks to maintain that “wild” feeling – but walkers should notice fewer rough patches and less wet areas, making for smoother safer walking and drier feet.



Volunteers are adding rock and gravel to make a smoother drier trail surface in some of the trail’s rougher sections.

The association will also be erecting new wayfinding signage and maps at trail intersections around the system and putting up trail markers so that hikers will feel more at ease navigating around the lake, up to the look off or down around the Cascades loop.

The association also has plans to make it easier to drive to the trails by erecting signage in Conway and in town and near the Racquette leading visitors to the top of the Culloden

Road. New signage and trail entrances are also planned for the trailhead.

The association volunteers had actually just started ramping up their trail work for the season in early March when everything got shut down. In March they made a rough cut of a new trail leading down from the look off – this new summit loop was part of preparations for a trail race, the Lily Lake Lollygag, cancelled by COVID-19.

Volunteers have just recently started back by inviting a core group of volunteers and maintaining physical distancing by working solo on different sections of the trail. This is slower and less fun but the association hopes, when restrictions ease, either this summer or next year, that they can organize some bigger volunteer gatherings.

If you’re walking the trail in the near future, be sure and let us know what you think with a post on the association’s Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/VanTasselLakeTrailsAssociation.

Brier Island Trail Committee's (BITC) Annual Planting Party

By Marie-Laure Hansson



May 24, 2020 was a perfect day for the Brier Island Trail Committee's Annual Planting Party, which was a great success, this year. We had a variety of perennials and annuals purchased with cash contributions as well as plants donated by community members.

Special thanks to Barb at St. Mary's Bay Gardens who, once again, was generous in her donations.



These flower boxes are looking better every year; within a few years, we will only need to add annuals.



Volunteers water and weed the boxes throughout the spring, summer and fall, on a rotating weekly schedule. And, yes, we adhered to social distancing. Well done and thank you, everyone!



Brier Island Trails Committee recognizes the support of the Province of Nova Scotia. We are pleased to work in partnership with the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage to develop and promote our cultural resources for all Nova Scotians.



HELP! It's Giant Hogweed!

By Jeff White

It seems that every month of every year, some animal or plant gets media attention (and social media attention) as a dangerous, invasive species, coming to a neighbourhood near you! The Asian Giant Hornet is one of the latest in the news, but there are many others. My own main interest is vascular plants, and 'news' of the Giant Hogweed always gets my attention.

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) is an invasive plant in Canada, originally from southwest Asia. It grows to be large and spectacular, but also has spectacular ill effects on humans. The plant contains toxins that can cause terrible skin inflammation, especially when sap gets on you and then you are in the sunlight.

The plant looks like a giant Queen Anne's Lace (Wild Carrot) plant - they are in the same family - but there are so many similar plants that can be confused with Giant Hogweed. So how do you know if that big leafy thing with large, flat, white flowers is Hogweed? Let me describe Hogweed, then contrast it with a few other similar plants we might see around Digby County. This is a challenge for me - I am a visual learner - but I will do my best!

The plant grows up from its root each year with leaves that can get quite large. Each leaf has a lot of points and serrated edges, a bit like a Maple leaf, but far bigger and divided up more.

When a plant is big enough to bloom, it sends up one or more stalks that can be a few metres tall!



There will be purple splotches on the green stem, and at the base of the petioles (leaf stems). The big leaves along the hairy stem get smaller toward the top, and at the top will grow several flower clusters, called umbels; much like Queen Anne's Lace, or Dill, or Goutweed, if you know their flowers, but much bigger. The flower cluster is flat topped and rounded, with hundreds of little white flowers. Look closely at an umbel and you see it is a bunch of little flower stalks all coming from the top end of the main stem. Here is a side view of an umbel (with seed pods on top, after flowers bloomed).



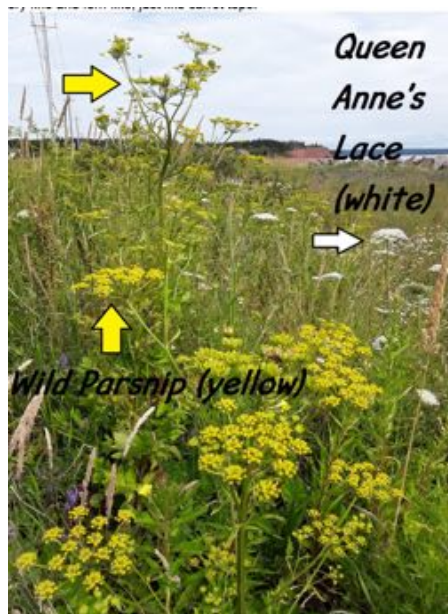
I have never seen Giant Hogweed in Digby County. Is it here? I do not know. But I have seen lots of other plants that could be confused with it. Such as Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*). It is a fairly common native species, which is very similar, but does not get as big as 'GH.' The leaves do not get as large. The stems of Cow Parsnip have no purple splotches. The big cluster of flowers on Cow Parsnip can have up to about 30 rays (little stems in the umbel), while GH will have 50 or more rays per umbel (flower cluster). In the photo below I count about 30 rays (with little flower clusters), so this must be Cow Parsnip.



Lots of other wild plants around here could also be mistaken for GH. Even Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) could be mistaken, but it's flower stem will be very narrow (less than a centimetre), while GH (or Cow Parsnip) will be more than a cm, even several cms wide. Queen Anne's Lace leaves are very fine and fern-like, just like carrot tops.

Another plant that has similar toxic effects upon the skin is Wild Parsnip, and it does grow all over the place along Digby Neck. On the shoulder of the road along Seawall Hill is one place. Wild Parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*) can get

to be a metre or so tall, with yellow flowers; and I find the whole plant tends to be greenish-yellow in colour. The leaves of Wild Parsnip remind me of celery leaves, if you can picture them - not like Queen Anne's Lace or Giant Hogweed at all.



All these plants I have mentioned so far are in the same plant family, hence the similar structure of the flower cluster. And a few others in this family are in the area. If any Angelica is growing in a ditch, for

instance, you might mistake it for Hogweed. And I suppose even the edible Elderberry bush could be mistaken for GH. The flowers are white, in flat-topped clusters, but these flowers are on a woody shrub, with leaves a bit like Ash tree leaves (with several leaflets along a stem).



A few online resources can be helpful for identification. This article on Giant Hogweed I find especially helpful.

<https://inaturalist.ca/taxa/130228-Heracleum-mantegazzianum>

OK, I have a confession for you, dear reader. I have never seen Giant Hogweed! But I would like to - I'm that curious. Do some research with reputable sources, and you too can eventually identify a mystery plant, even that suspected 'Giant Hogweed' in your neighbourhood.

Editor's Note: I have seen Giant Hogweed while cycling in Ireland in 2017. Unfortunately, we did not stop to take a photo of the plant that was at least as tall as we are but later, in an art gallery, I took this photo of a dried Giant Hogweed stalk- yes, it is giant!



A Virtual Farm Visit

By Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly

Farm Open House visits usually occur in early May as farmers are preparing their green houses and fields for planting. Well, thanks to the COVID 19 lockdown, these visits were cancelled. But, Wild Rose Organic Farm in Gilbert's Cove held their open house live on Face Book and I joined the tour.

Although I have been growing my little garden for many years, there was much to learn- bed preparation, Community Supported Agriculture Baskets

(CSAs), intercropping, using water jugs as a heat source, winter blankets, spiders are our friends, this list goes on.

There was also a special guest who spoke about the need to help the endangered barn swallows. Wild Rose Farm has built nesting platforms in their barn to attract the barn swallows.

Did you know it is important to remove weeds when they are small because they take nutrition away from the tender seedlings.

Do you know what cotyledons are?

And, delicious snacks were enjoyed although FB visitors could not enjoy them recipes were shared on their Face Book page.

Interested in gardening? To visit Wild Rose Farm and take the tour, check out their Face Book Page and look for Farm Tour May 2020 Greenhouse #1 on Youtube. Take a drive to shop at the the farm store. You will not be disappointed.

Celebrate Outdoors

By Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly

How do you plan a birthday celebration during a pandemic lockdown? Little River resident, Jenna Milbury came up with a great idea that involved the whole community and the wonderful outdoor environment in which we live.

Jenna and her family are great outdoor enthusiasts and are always going on many adventures in the village, along trails, along the water's edge and in all seasons. I don't think there are many places they haven't explored.



Her youngest son, Landon, was turning five- an exciting age for a young lad. He couldn't have his friends or extended family members over, but he enjoys going for walks and finding things. Recently, a villager's granddaughter had painted a few small rocks and placed them along the roadside in the hopes of bringing some cheer to the community. Young Landon took

great joy in discovering those rocks.

So, Jenna put out the call for friends, family and neighbours to paint rocks and hide them along the road throughout the village. And what a response! So many people were excited to help out.

I recall going for an evening walk the evening before Landon's birthday treasure hunt and I had so much fun discovering the rocks of many shapes and colours. I could just imagine the excitement Jenna's family would have the next morning!



In Jenna's words, "It's true when they say it takes a village to raise a child. I want to thank every single person who took the time to paint some rocks and hide them. Near



and far, we spent an hour hunting for them. He's beyond happy. You all made his day; he'll remember this for a while."



Are there other exciting Digby Neck and Islands outdoor celebrations? Send us your stories and photos.



**Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre
Association Board of Directors
for 2019-20**

- Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly (Chair)
- Peter Morehouse (Vice Chair)
- Roger Outhouse (Secretary)
- Bonnie MacLachlan
- Jeff White
- Melissa Merritt
- Frank Garron
- Amanda Addington
- Hannah Charlton

- We continue to welcome new members. Please consider joining our association and continue to make this a wonderful place to live and visit.
- We want your stories and photos. Please let us know what you are enjoying along our beautiful Bay of Fundy. Please send your stories, photos and dates of upcoming projects to anna-marie.mackenzie-kelly@mail.mcgill.ca

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