

In With the Tide

The Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association Newsletter



Our Fundy-Our Future

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All Dressed up and nowhere to go, Dec 3, 2020

Patience for Dumping Day 2020

Photos and text by Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly

I usually try to wait until Dumping Day (the first day our lobster season in Southwest Nova Scotia) before putting together the Fall *In With the Tide* as it is an important day in our communities. The set day is always the last Monday in November and this year, it was to be November 30th.

For the past few years, weather seems to get in the way and the start date gets delayed, usually a day or two. Well; this year was an exception, for sure. The anxiety levels amongst the fishers grew as each day passed.

The morning of December 3rd looked beautiful. The sun shone brightly and from the wharf in Little River, the bay was a mirror

(blue sky photos). But, no, the boats were not allowed to go. There must have been poor conditions on the way. It wasn't until 4:00 am Tuesday 8 December that they were finally allowed to depart. It was a cold morning with a light snow falling and a gentle breeze. The excitement on the wharf was addictive as the fishers boarded their boats and, just like excited young children, inched their boats out anxiously waiting for 4:00 am! And they were off!

As I walked home, the clouds dissipated and the full moon shown brightly to guide them on their way.

We wish everyone a safe and healthy season.



A Whole Lotta Otters

Text and photos by Jonathan Riley

In the past year, I have come across otters or their tracks on nine different occasions. Before this year, I had only seen them once and that was several years ago now.

That first occasion was on the West Branch of the Bear River. I was paddling solo and slowly through a large meadow, rounded a bend and there they were: four brown heads in the water. My first thought was beaver, but the heads stayed staring at me and even approached for a closer look. I was very very excited – too excited to get any photos.

That winter Larry Goodwin and I saw tracks crossing the Acacia Valley Trails that I am now convinced were otter tracks. But besides that, I had seen no otters until Dec. 7 last year.

On a group hike around a large lake in Annapolis County, we not only followed a beautiful set of otter tracks, we managed to see the sleek animal before it slipped through a hole in the ice.

The very next day, about 60 km away as the crow flies, I saw more otter tracks crossing a frozen lake just outside Digby.



A distinctive set of otter tracks show where it slid over a wooden spillway in Annapolis County

In the year since then I have seen otters swimming five different times, although three of those locations were within 4km of each other. Most of these times, I have been canoeing

quietly and have accidentally drifted up on them.

Each time has been magical. They move much faster than beavers normally do – Bob Bancroft likens otters to torpedos and I’d agree with that description. Some of them, especially the solitary ones, disappear quickly. In groups however, they will sometimes hang around and stare. They pop their heads out of the water and huff quite loudly; I assume they are trying to smell what I am.



An otter swam by the bow of my canoe on a lake in the Medway Lakes Wilderness Area.

The most recent sighting was a bit of good luck; I was paddling into a small bay of a big lake when I saw air bubbles marking the path of some air-breathing mammal. I stopped paddling and just waited. A second later, the familiar head and ears popped up out of the water. It swam right in front of my canoe, then dove noisily into the water. It popped up a few feet away and huffed and puffed before disappearing.



I have read they can hold their breath for four minutes and I’ve also read eight minutes. Whichever is true, this is enough time for them to swim hundreds of meters before resurfacing.

As I hung out in this bay, I noticed schools of minnows in the shallows and I imagine the otter had been herding and hunting them.

I don’t know if I’m seeing more otters because I’m dialed in and maybe paddling a bit more, or if otter populations are on the upswing. One theory I have heard a few times now is that there are fewer people trapping beavers and therefore fewer otters are being taken as by-catch.

But, I also read a super informative and interesting book last year about otters: The Otter’s Tale, by Simon Cooper. Cooper’s book is about a different species, the European River Otter, and paints the picture of a year in the life of these animals. I can’t imagine there is too much difference in lifestyles between the two species.

Out west they have the same otter as here, the North American River Otter, but additionally they have another species, the much more famous Sea Otter.

Anyway, I wonder if reading Cooper’s book might just might have raised my consciousness a bit so I’m catching sight of otters more often? Whatever the reason, I hope to see more of these beautiful swimmers in 2021. Has anyone else been seeing more otters? Are there other animals you have been seeing more of this year? Let me know at jriley@digbymun.ca.

Jonathan's 2020, the year of the otter in Southwest Nova Scotia

Dec. 7, 2019 – saw one otter and followed tracks around a large lake, Annapolis County
 Dec. 8, 2019 – followed otter tracks (of two or three otters) over a frozen lake near Digby, Digby County
 Feb. 16, 2020 – otter tracks near New France, Digby County
 Aug. 7, 2020 – one otter swimming in Kejimikujik National Park, Queens County

Sept. 4, 2020 – many otter tracks on muddy shore of lake south of Weymouth, Digby County
 Sept. 6, 2020 – four otters swimming at mouth of a large river south of Bear River, Digby County
 Sept. 26, 2020 – two otters swimming, in the Medway Lake Wilderness Area, Annapolis County

Sept. 26, 2020 – two otters swimming, in the Medway Lake Wilderness Area, Annapolis County
 Sept. 27, 2020 – two otters swimming about 4km away from above sighting, again in the MWLA, Annapolis County
 Dec. 6, 2020 – one otter swimming, geographically between the two above sightings still in the MWLA, Annapolis County

Creature of the Cove: Hairy Doris (Acanthodoris Pilosa)

By Roger Outhouse for the Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association

The photo says it all. This is the most common marine slug from Nova Scotia to Virginia. You may wonder why almost no one ever notices them even though they are found in tidal pools and intertidal exposed areas at low tide. It turns out that they hide under rocks and among the seaweeds and they look like little blobs when out of water. They are about 3cm (1") long and come in a wide array of colors including yellow, grey, maroon, brown, mauve, orange and white.

In water they literally bloom to one of nature's most beautiful creatures. The Hairy Doris is decorated with tiny thorn like spines over the body and a tight formation of frilly breathing gills near the back end. Two prominent tentacles at the head

smell out their prey. Their favorite food consists of tiny calcium armored bryozoan animal colonies.

Globally there are well over 2000 different species of sea slugs and it is estimated that there are lots more to be discovered. Just google marine sea slugs to view photos and videos of the world's most bizarre critters on our planet!



Sea slugs are both male and female (hermaphroditic) and when breeding one passes by another and they stab each other with a sharp stylet tube which transfers sperm to the other. This means a single mating doubles the reproduction rate. This is important as they are thought to live only two years. Both will lay string like ribbons of eggs during a spawning season which goes from March to November.

Amazingly, sea slugs have inspired dedicated international science conferences featuring only them and even Queen Elizabeth, while visiting California, USA in 1983, was presented a gift fit for royalty in the form of framed photographs of sea slugs.

"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. The wheelchair accessible picnic table will provide an improvement to our Trailhead rest area and will remove barriers for persons with disabilities in public spaces."



Jeff Lombard enjoys a snack at the new wheelchair accessible picnic table



Substation Constructed in Freeport



The substation is designed to connect the subsea cable from the platform to the Nova Scotia Power grid. As part of this connection, the voltage needs to be taken from the platform generated voltage of 6.6kV to the 12.47kV to match the grid, this is the function of the large transformer at the substation.



The other components in the substation are used to provide protection/ switching for the subsea cable, substation equipment and the Nova Scotia Power grid.



The substation is designed to provide enough capacity for 800kVA of connected platforms (1x PLAT-I 4.63 & 1x PLAT-I 6.40). Situated in the container at the substation are the platform control & data-logging computers and Wi-Fi and communications equipment.

Photo to the left is of the new unit being built at AF Theriault Boatyard in Meteghan.

A Buzz of Activity to Promote Outdoor Learning at Islands Consolidated School submitted

Thanks to the generous support of our community as well as Islands Home and School, Islands Consolidated School now has a wonderful outdoor classroom for students to enjoy learning comfortably outside. Individuals who donated will be recognized with a plaque on a chair.



The assembly of the chairs was assigned to the Grade 8 Tech Ed class. It was a wonderful real world learning opportunity for the students to help with improvement of their learning environment.



The next phase of the outside learning environment is the installation of a deck.



The deck is currently under construction by William Lucas of Long Island Property Management. Phase 3 will be the addition of a gazebo over the deck

expected in Spring/Summer 2021. The shortage of lumber is causing delays to the project.



Justin Oliver's Grade 8 class at ICS practice starting fires with magnesium and flint starters.

Thank You, ANN!
 Submitted by Monica Stark
 Photos by Andy Moir

Ann's Community Solar Greenhouse

This beautiful community greenhouse was a collaborative effort involving a lot of people. One of those special people has been Ann Schweitzer who spent hundreds of hours researching, designing and advocating for this dream to come true.

Ann studiously compared designs, did innumerable calculations, built scale-models, incorporated innovative growing features, ensured an unparalleled level of accessibility for Seniors, and in the end, created a greenhouse which is so much more than a greenhouse. Ann is a warrior, dreamer, leader, trail-blazer and our friend whom we love dearly.

In honour, recognition and love, we call this community space, *"Ann's Community Solar Greenhouse"*.



And now, the **whole** community is working to ensure this project is completed because the **whole** community will benefit from the activity and produce grown in this state-of-the-art greenhouse. **KUDOS to everyone!**





You can help!

The Freeport Community Greenhouse Project is moving along quickly with the hope it will be ready for planting in March 2021.

In line with our association's mandate, the BofFDCA is an active supporter of this project as ecotourism involvement and sustainable communities are at the heart of our work. The greenhouse is important to current and future generations as our connection to a sustainable, natural and healthy environment is beneficial to everyone in our community.

The Greenhouse was designed by local residents, Ann Schweitzer and Frank Palmermo, built with the participation of community residents and the professional construction services of Tim Crocker. The greenhouse will be fully accessible, equipped with geo-thermal heating, natural rainwater collection, a potential growing season of 8-10 months, able to withstand 180 km winds, and built to last decades. Geared in the first instance for Seniors, the Greenhouse is simultaneously meant for general community participation, sharing, and food security. (Rick Wallace, Community Greenhouse Committee & Co-Chair, Freeport Community Development Association)

The estimated cost for the greenhouse is \$45,000. To date, \$32,000 have been confirmed through various grants. The BofFDCA is pledging to help fundraise the remaining \$13,000 through donations for which charitable donation receipts will be issued. Donations received will be used to cover labour costs and necessary materials to construct wheelchair access, raised beds, etc. needed to complete the project.

Donations can be made by sending a cheque made out to the **Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association** and please state on the memo line that it is for the **Freeport Greenhouse Project**. Please send your donation to The Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association, PO Box 66, Freeport, NS, B0V 1B0. E-transfers can also be sent to bayoffundycassoc@gmail.com. If donating by e-transfer, please ensure you include an address to which we can send a receipt.



Photos by Roger Outhouse



Big Meadow Bog: Traditional Uses

By Roger Outhouse

We have been following much progress on the restoration projects of Big Meadow Bog and many might wonder what is the purpose of restoring and preserving a bog? It is just a bog, right? Well, there is history and life in that bog!

Brier Island and its coves, coastal waters, mudflats and forests provided food and haven for Mi'Kmaq, while the local lava basalt rock served as a rich resource to craft implements for hunting and fishing. Mi'Kmaq on Brier Island used the peat bog for thousands of years: artefacts found in the area place Mi'Kmaq people living here dating back to 1000 BC.

In the mid-1700s Europeans settled on Brier Island, and they made their living by fishing, hunting and berry picking in the bog. The bog has always been intriguing to all who venture in. It is both wild and difficult to explore; yet it has the power to draw people into its quiet and magical

space. Recently, Islands Consolidated students surveyed several elders who could reflect on the bog and its changes. Elders explained that the once wide-open bog became overgrown with trees and shrubs, and few had visited the area in recent decades. How could such a habitat be valuable to the residents of Brier Island?

As interview questions were answered, the elders' eyes lit up and the smiles widened as they revealed the true blessings supplied by this ancient bog. Each fall the bog outlet was dammed to raise water levels to harvest winter ice for a year-round supply stored in three Westport ice houses. Before refrigeration this practice was instrumental in keeping household foods cold and providing ice to the village ice cream parlour store for preparing and serving the beloved treat. Best of all the ice was of great value to the fishing industry.

Elders told of how young and old were able to skate on Jimmy's

pond and down along the twisting stream called Snake River, nearly reaching the other side of Brier Island. Bonfires and skating parties were common. Hockey was also a main attraction and although some of the sticks were handmade and the occasional missing puck might have been replaced with a small rock the game was thrilling to play! The frozen pond was used as a winter path by oxen teams for carting loads of firewood necessary for heating homes.

Elders in the past showed young people how to hunt deer on the slopes and ducks in the lily ponds. There were family outings to pick a variety of berries, and fathers making Sunday trips to the lily ponds for dining table bouquets.

As we work together to help restore the bog to its natural state, we remember the importance the bog contributes to humans and all life on Earth.

Hiking in the Rain? Why Not!

Text and Photos by Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly

A forecast of heavy rain in mid-October did not deter an enthusiastic group of 13 Fundy Erratics hikers from heading out on the little known Aquaduct trail along Bear River. Greg Turner is an amazing source of information about the history of the aquaduct and I don't have enough space to tell you all about it; but I do want to share some beautiful photos of this trail that deserves official status-



Brier Island Trails Committee (BITC) Fundraiser

submitted

Looking for a Christmas gift or a birthday gift? Nova Scotia artist Pat Shattuck’s original watercolour painting of The Big Meadow Bog on Brier Island has been reproduced as an 11 cm x 14 cm (4 in x 5.5 in) notecard (see the photo below). Sold in bundles of three or five, it’s an opportunity to support BITC and give a gift at the same time! This beautiful reproduction of The Big Meadow Bog comes with its envelope and would make a great gift. The notecard can be used as a greeting card or placed in a frame (not provided).

3 Notecards to a Canadian address \$15.00 CAD

5 Notecards to a Canadian address \$25.00 CAD

3 Notecards to an American address \$15.00 USD

5 Notecards to an American address \$25.00 USD



To purchase your bundle of three or five notecards, send an e-transfer to marielaurehansson@gmail.com , and **include your name and mailing address**. The cost for a bundle of three notecards is \$15.00 CAD or \$15.00 USD, and a bundle of five notecards is \$25.00 CAD or \$25.00 USD. Mailing costs are included with the purchase price. Send marielaurehansson@gmail.com your name and mailing address to complete your Christmas gift giving! Once your e-transfer is received, BITC will mail your notecards through Canada Post.

More Great Photos

This partial albino deer was recently spotted on a Digby Neck lawn.



We commend ICS staff and Students for their many wonderful projects to learn in and from the great outdoors!



Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association

Dear Members and Donors:

Well, as we all know, it has been an 'interesting' year. Despite the lockdowns across the nation and around the world, the communities along Digby Neck and Islands as well as most of Nova Scotia consider ourselves very lucky to be living here. With the most amazing summer weather, coastlines and wooded areas to explore and gardens to tend, so many were out and about rediscovering the beauty of our province.

On the Islands, the BofFDCA continues to work closely with the Brier Island Trails Committee (BITC) in their efforts on the Big Meadow Bog Trail. The Balancing Rock trail got a good clearing with more gravel spread and a beautiful patch of blue felt lichen (Nova Scotia's provincial lichen) was discovered on the trail! We participated in many meetings to discuss the expansion of open pen fish farms and we were pleased when the company withdrew their interest in working in Nova Scotia.

Sustainable Oceans Applied Research (SOAR) continued to work in the community including an interactive summer program, "Creature Features", and continuing work and research on the Grand Passage tidal power system. Do check out SOAR's FaceBook page to see all the exciting things they have been doing.

On the Neck, activities were much quieter but with the great weather, Lake Midway was a popular spot with many local families and Nova Scotians from around the province enjoying 'staycations'.

BofFDCA welcomed two new directors, Amanda Addington, currently working in land-based aquaculture in the Yukon and Hannah Charlton who recently completed a project with Clean Annapolis River (CARP) and has been working on our BofFDCA FaceBook page. Yes! We are now on social media.

It is once again the time to renew your membership to continue to support our association and the many activities we work on or support each year. The projects embarked on by the Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association to maintain, protect and promote our natural environment are so important. Please take a few moments to send in your renewal and encourage others to join. We are also looking for fund raising activities so we can continue to do what we do best- promote our Bay of Fundy along Digby Neck and Islands. If you have a creative fundraising idea, please share with us!

The membership form can be found on the next page. Memberships can be sent in by mail or, we can now accept e-transfers to bayoffundydcassoc@gmail.com. Please put 'membership' in the memo line.

Our Fundy, Our Future



**We wish all our readers a very safe, healthy
and happy holiday season as we all look
forward to 2021**





Our Fundy-Our Future

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

- Anna-Marie MacKenzie Kelly (Chair)
Peter Morehouse (Vice Chair)
Roger Outhouse (Secretary/Treasurer)
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

The Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association

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righthouse51@gmail.com



MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Email: _____

Telephone: _____ Date: _____

Please circle the applicable membership category:

- Individual Membership: \$10.00
Family Membership: \$25.00
Patron: \$500.00
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One Time Donation: \$ _____

Please make cheque payable to: The Bay of Fundy Discovery Centre Association and mail to the address above. Charitable receipts are issued.