

OCTOBER 2020

HALIFAX NEWS

The Unwanted Night Visitor! A Farm Story by the Mice of the Ditherer and Dewer Clans

Brought to you by Judi Kotanchik of Halifax, Vermont



This is not a story about one of our clans. We have shared the experiences of the Ditherer Clan and the Dewer Clan. These are two fine families of mice (including me!) that live on the Farm. Well, really, they are the year-round occupants and see to it that that remains to be the case.

The Farm is not a big, center-entrance colonial. No, this farm is very old and small, and the cellar hole belies the difficulties of building back in 1777. So, there really is no room for other clans to come in and take over...especially when it is a clan of rats!

We have talked about the upcoming elections of who would manage the property. And as it turns out, Joey the Head Mouse found a resolution to his problem, and this worked out satisfactorily. You see, the other group interested in taking over the comfort of the Farm was a pesky, pushy group of very outspoken chipmunks. Cute as they might be to humans, they are a persistent predator of the same foods that appeal to us mice, lovers of the same tight, cozy spaces in the warmth of the cellar hole we mice cherish, and—oh dear—they are ever so noisy. There would be no peace if they were ever allowed entrance.

But today, I have to share with you, dear readers, a most unbelievable story. Now this comes to you third hand, you have to understand, for you see, the dear owner of the Farm was not there to see it herself. Rather, a visiting family was there and later told the tale we mice endured, thus conveying our adventures to the audience of humans. During the summer, the owner has people come from all over to stay at the Farm. It's just such a wonderful place that people who have been before, love to come back and just enjoy the peace and tranquility. But alas, there would be no tranquility for this family!

The night was Vermont summer balmy. By that I mean that leaving the door open in the master bedroom—the door to the pool—the humans can lie there on the bed and just let the cool breezes comfortably wash over them as they drift off to sleep. There is both a fan and an air conditioner, and only on very rare occasions have they ever been needed. This night was still and pleasant, and off to sleep the visitors drifted.

In the middle of the night, strange noises woke them up. When they turned on the light, they were in for a surprise. There was a visitor most unwanted...a water rat! I feel certain that our dear owner would have been horrified! I know I was. But this rat had met his match. The visitors did not know how the rat had gotten in, but they certainly knew that they had to get him out—stat!

Most people would have packed their bags and been OUT the door! But this family lived in an old house themselves, so seeing a rat was not new, although seeing a mouse would have been far preferable (you won't get any argument on that point from me). This, as I say, was a water rat: an 8- to 10-inch long, distant relative of the mouse, as big as two of the clansmice put together! We seldom if ever see a water rat around the outside of the house, let alone imagine that he would come into our domain, so even for us mice, it was a surprise.



The visitors chased him around the old farmhouse for several hours, and at one point he even climbed the headboard and peeked over it. What appalling cheek! The thought of it just makes us cringe. We little mice, when in that situation, find a hidey hole and make ourselves scarce. But this was just a dumb water rat too scared to be making good choices. Sometimes that happens when you are in a panicky situation.



Finally, he did make himself scarce, and they thought he had found his way back out. So, they settled back in to make the best of what was left of the night. Now, you would think that to be the end of the story. But what they found out was that he had hidden between the mattress and box spring. Oh, can you even imagine? They tossed off the mattress and, making a maze, found a way to corner him and work him through the maze and out the door!

What a long night. As the visitors finally settled down knowing it was safe to, the sun was coming up! In the morning, their initial puzzlement on how he got in was dispelled. They found a hole between the screen door and the house door, and it was there the rat found his way back where he belonged. I have to tell you that if I were those guests, that stay would have been over! But this rat was lucky to deal with hearty people who peaceably enjoyed the rest of their visit and went home with a terrific vacation story to tell.



mus musculus – rattus norvegicus

Historical footnote: In Halifax history, the Earl Henry Farm is known as “The Stafford Place” for Col. Sam Stafford, who lived there during the 1800’s, followed by the Sumner DeWolfe family, who were owners at the turn of the century. George Earl Henry (1893-1969) farmed the property from 1918 until 1948. The Freeman family owned it from 1953-1987, followed by Van Hoosears who sold to the Kotanchiks.



FIRST FROST IN HALIFAX came the morning of September 19, 2020, followed by three more morning frosts!

TOWN NEWS

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS

On Sept. 1, 10 men and two trucks responded to a mutual aid call in Readsboro.

On Sept. 1 seven men and one truck responded to a medical call on Bellows Rd.

On Sept. 2, seven men responded to a medical call on Hanson Road.

On Sept. 3, three men responded to a medical call on Hanson Road.

On Sept. 3, four men responded to a medical call on Deer Park Rd.

On Sept. 5, two responded to Old Lane.

On Sept. 6, three responded to Sprague Road.

On Sept. 13, six personnel responded to Gregory Lane.

Most all of these September calls were medical calls; our firemen have training in CPR and basic first aid but mostly they are there to help in whatever way they can. They leave most medical things to the ambulance crew and other first responders.

HALIFAX HONOR ROLL. Renovation is underway! Send donations to Town of Halifax – Honor Roll, P O Box 127, West Halifax VT 05358. Thank you!

SORROW

I was so sorry to hear that Wendell Collins, age 93, passed on Saturday, September 26. Wendell lived with the Sumner family on Collins Road in Halifax in his younger years. He and Jean, his wife, had a home in Fitchburg, MA, and a 'camp' in Halifax. They were a wonderful couple who will be missed by many. Wayne and I spent many enjoyable hours at campfires at their 'camp' here in Halifax. Jean passed a few years ago and Wendell just kept saying he wanted to go be with her. Together again. – Joan Courser



SENIOR MEAL

The October Senior Meal is on Friday the 16th. It will be take-out again from the Community Hall at 20 Brook Road in West Halifax. Pick up meals between 11 AM and 1 PM. The menu is sweet sausage stroganoff, potato, veggie, rolls and dessert. I am hoping that folks will be ready to dine in by November. Please call Joan at 802 368 7733 if you are ready to dine in so I prepare for that. The Governor allows 25 persons inside, and we have room to social distance for that number (1 person per 100 square feet). – Joan Courser

NEWSLETTER. If you are receiving the mailed, paper newsletter and have not yet paid this year, please look at your address label to see when your subscription is due. Subs are still \$7.00. If yours is due, please send a check made out to NEWSLETTER to PO Box 27, West Halifax, VT 05358



JOAN'S SIGHTINGS.

Folks are still seeing lots of turkeys but that will probably end when the hunting season starts. I truly believe that those birds know when that season starts.....they disappear !!!!! I enjoy seeing them as I know others do, too.

We have been seeing a young fox around our place which is not good for my chickens. So now I have to stand guard when we let them out of their enclosure.

I am enjoying the birds, but some have already left for warmer climates. I miss the hummers. I had so, so many of what I think were Purple Finch ??? but they have all left now, and I always have Purple Finch all winter so I am not really sure just what they were. I still have my two or three Chickadees and a White-Breasted Nuthatch. I had two of them but think one got run over on the road. Whatever kind of bird it was, it was so smashed I could not identify it very well, But, because one of the two is missing, I believe one was hit by a car. That made me very sad.

The number of Blue Jays has increased. They are ruling the roost here right now. I still enjoy my three or four Cardinals. I have a few Mourning Doves. I know the numbers will pick up after the first snow.

Molly Stone sent me a nice note about being surprised that Halifax had Sand Hill Cranes. She said where she is in Florida they have signs for Sand Hill Crane crossings!!!

Other Sand Hill Crane sightings: <https://sandhillfinder.savingcranes.org/near>

Send your animal sightings to Joan at jwcinvt@gmail.com

- Joan Courser

On Hanson Road we are seeing dragonflies, butterflies (small yellow, big monarch), nuthatches, blue jays, flickers, robins, turkeys, hawks, crows, shrews, deer, red foxes, black bears, woodchucks, and little snakes under the rocks we turn over. We hear the owls hoot at night. On Gates Pond I watched the kingfishers dive-bombing their fishy prey and the river otters playing and chattering. On South Pond I saw a loon diving. A couple weeks after I photographed the hawk pictured, I spotted it standing on the grass. I moved closer to a window to see better, but it saw my movement and took off. It was flying low and heavy – because it was carrying its prey: a large bird flapping its wings! I think the prey was a grouse, judging by the size and short wingspan. - *Laurel Copeland*



Old stump made by a beaver felling a tree

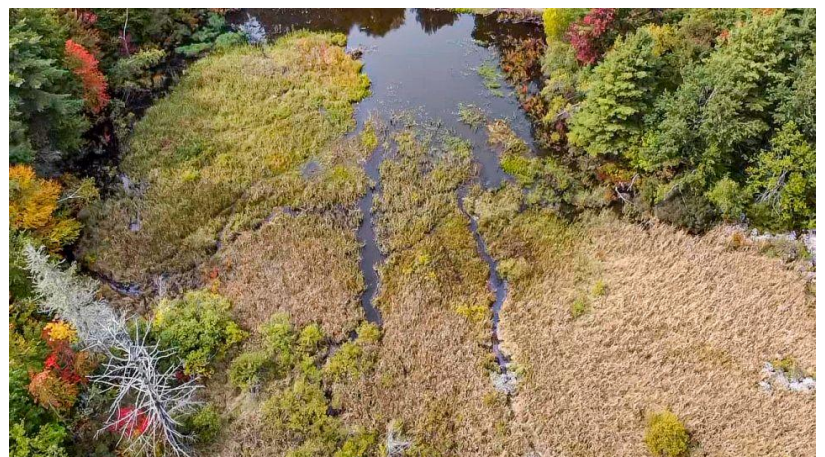
BEAVERS IN VERMONT.

Prior to European settlement, there may have been as many as ten times the number of beavers that presently exist in New England today. The unregulated trapping that occurred as a result of the early fur trade, coupled with the clearing of the New England forests in the 1700s to mid-1800s for farming, virtually eliminated beaver from Vermont by the beginning of the 1800s. In 1910, beavers were protected by state law and began to make a slow comeback. The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department reintroduced beaver into Vermont from New York and Maine in the 1920s and 1930s. The reintroduction coincided with the abandonment of many of Vermont's farms, and the subsequent reforestation created an excellent habitat for the growing beaver population.

An average adult beaver weighs 40 to 60 pounds. The heaviest known beaver weighed 110 pounds and was taken by Vernon Baily in 1921. Baily caught the record-setting beaver on the Iron River in Wisconsin. A beaver colony is usually composed of three generations: the adult male and female, their yearlings, and the kits of the year. Beavers tend to mate for life. Black bears, coyotes, bobcats, and

fishers occasionally prey on beavers.

Beaver are North America's preeminent keystone species; that is, they create habitat for many other species including mammals, birds, plants, fish, and invertebrates. Beaver increase biological productivity in many ways. The wetlands they create in the forests increase the diversity of the landscape. This is important even after a beaver abandons a wetland. When dams decay through lack of maintenance, flowages initially become wet meadows. Like 'active' flowages, these meadows are unique habitats that also have great natural value. Beaver are an ancient species that have been widespread and abundant for a long time.



Aerial view of beaver wetlands in Halifax. Photo: D M Erickson



Frost edges leaves on September 19th.

“Yup, this is my castle now” A woodchuck in an old outbuilding.



WILDLIFE CROSSINGS. Thanks for your calls and emails! If you see one of these 5 mammals **on or crossing a road**, or if you see tracks/scat that suggest one crossed the road, let me know (LaurelACopeland@gmail.com, 368-2439). I am interested in the date of the road crossing and the precise location. If you have a smart phone, take a pic of the location and email it (full size) to me; I will pull the geographic coordinates off the EXIF data embedded in the photo. The 5 animals are **Bobcat, Moose, River Otter, Black Bear, and Fisher.**

The Multi-Billion Dollar Food Waste Problem

Every year, American consumers, businesses, and farms spends \$218 billion a year, or 1.3% of the Gross Domestic Product, growing, processing, transporting, and disposing **food that is never eaten**. That’s 52 million tons of food sent to landfill annually, plus another 10 million tons that is discarded or left unharvested on farms. Meanwhile, one in seven Americans is food insecure. This website has an interactive graph of various effects of reducing food waste: <https://www.refed.com/?sort=economic-value-per-ton>

Newsletter
P O Box 27
West Halifax VT 05358



H'm...This might work for the winter.

Halifax News

OCTOBER 2020

**Subscriptions for Paper Newsletter by
US Mail:** \$7 per year to cover postage
and labels; write checks to “Newsletter”
and send to P O Box 27, West Halifax
VT 05358.

Thank you!!!

NEWSLETTER - Send your Halifax story
to Laurel LaurelACopeland@gmail.com
or Joan JWCinVt@gmail.com
(802.368.7733; PO Box 27 05358).



Bears are in fall hyperphagia (feeding frenzy) now,
fattening up for the winter on nuts and berries.
Black bears hibernate when the food runs out.

Editor LaurelACopeland@gmail.com. Free color e-version emailed and online.