

December 2021

HALIFAX NEWS

ASH TREES IN HALIFAX

by Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont

Our Halifax Tree Warden, Dr. Sue Kelly, DVM, attended a Conservation Commission meeting this fall and proposed that Halifax carry out an inventory of ash trees on town rights of way. Several of us enthusiastically volunteered to participate in the training and inventory activities. I was especially excited as I had taken the training in Guilford in 2019 but been unable to use it fully, although I had been practicing identifying ash trees. Joanne Garton is the Technical Assistance Coordinator for ash tree inventory in the state of Vermont, with Vermont Agency of Natural Resources in the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation up in Montpelier. She came down to West Halifax to train us on October 14th. Six days later Sue and I led a second training for a few folks who could not make the first date.



Ash tree canopy shows opposite branching and “stubby fingers” – thick terminal twigs stout enough to hold the ash tree’s heavy compound leaves

Ash trees are of interest because of the emerald ash borer or EAB, an invasive beetle that has been spreading east and south from Detroit, Michigan since at least 2002. The beetle lays eggs in the crevices of ash tree bark. A couple weeks later, the larvae hatch out and burrow through to the sapwood, the transportation system of a living tree, where they feed on the inner layer, the phloem. The larvae will pupate and bore a hole through the bark after one or two winters to reproduce and perpetuate the cycle. Within 2-4 years, the destruction of the phloem is so great that the tree dies. A 2017 report noted that EAB had killed more than 4 billion ash trees in Ohio (<https://fairfield.osu.edu/news/emerald-ash-borer>).

About 5% to 7% of the trees in Vermont are ash trees; that comes to about 150 million trees. When the ash tree dies, the wood becomes brittle and the tree unstable, making the logging process dangerous.

Typically, the tree will require a cherry-picker (crane or bucket) to drop it safely. Because some areas have seen 99% die-off of ash trees within 6 years of EAB infestation, towns in Vermont are concerned about having too many dead trees falling on the roads for the road crew to keep up with. Knowing the extent of our ash tree population on the rights of way lets us plan ahead.

To inventory ash trees, we use an app on a GPS-enabled smartphone or tablet. GPS is short for Global Positioning System, a system of satellites and their signals that lets us pinpoint locations on earth. We use Field Maps or Collector from ArcGIS / ESRI. This app lets us record a little bit of information about an ash tree while the app records the GPS coordinates. This means we have to get pretty close to every ash tree along the right of way. In other words, we were proposing to walk every mile of the roads of the town of Halifax, looking for and identifying ash trees, and stopping near each one to record its location and size. We could skip Vermont Route 112 because that is the responsibility of the state.



Distinctive diamond pattern of the bark helps identify ash trees



So far we've inventoried a few miles of the roads of Halifax. Our progress week to week can be seen in images of the online map maintained by the state (above). Each ash tree we enter into the database appears as a bright green (or blue) square on the map. The squares are in lines because we only record ash trees along the roads. I started in the northwest corner of Halifax (Hanson Road and Collins Road) while Sue Kelly started on Branch Road and Jacksonville Stage Road. Above you see our additions over four weeks from left to right, from the first week recorded October 30th through November 18th. Now we pause while the state updates their website.

HISTORY — The geographical centre of the town is three-fourths of a mile north of what is now known as the Centre. The frame of a meeting house was erected within a few rods of the geographical centre previous to 1780. But a few enterprising citizens established the business of the town at the place now called the Centre, so that the original frame of a meeting house was abandoned, and the present Congregational meeting house at the business centre was erected in 1782, but was not completed till several years afterwards, though it was occupied as a place of worship.

The land upon which the meeting house stands and three or four acres of the common, together with the adjoining cemetery grounds, were deeded to the Congregational Society by Deacon MC QUILLIS of Colerain. That part of the Common south of the road was given to the Congregational Society by Dr. Richardson.

In the original grant of the town one lot of 360 acres was appropriated for the benefit of schools. This lot is in the northeast corner of the town, commonly called Thomas Hill. The land is sold with the reserve, that the interest of two dollars a year per acre shall be annually paid into the town treasury in the month of ___ for the benefit of the schools. The sum of \$43.20. — *Excerpted from Rev. H. Eastman's history of Halifax; Vermont Historical Gazetteer; http://sites.rootsweb.com/~vtwindha/vhg5/vt_gazetteer-halifax.htm.*



The Taylor-Stacy Cemetery in Halifax has headstones from the Hatch, Larrabee, and other families whose names grace local roads. This headstone memorializes Milo Hatch, d. 1822.

TOWN NEWS

DEC. 17: SENIOR MEAL. The next Senior meal is Friday, December 17 serving at noon at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax. Menu baked ham, macaroni and cheese, vegetable, roll and dessert. Take-out available. A call to Joan at 802-368-7733 is appreciated. Free will donation of \$3.00 is asked but not mandatory. Sponsored by Senior Solutions. Hope to see you there.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

November 11, nine men and two trucks responded to a mutual aid call in Whitingham to assist with a house fire. November 15, four men and one truck responded to 'cover' the Vernon station.

November 22, four men responded to a rescue call on McMillan Road, Deerfield Valley ambulance transported a person to a Greenfield hospital, and Whitingham rescue assisted.

November 26, five men assisted Deerfield Valley ambulance with an unresponsive person on Phillips Hill Road who was then taken to a Greenfield hospital.

JOAN'S SIGHTINGS

Several Blue Jays, a Downy and a Hairy Woodpecker, and also quite often a Red-Bellied Woodpecker. Three White-Breasted Nuthatch, a few Goldfinch, a male Purple Finch I think just passing through, but I hope staying, a few Chickadees. I hear the large Pileated Woodpecker but never see them. So much enjoy the birds! And Merry Christmas to all! – *Joan Courser*

On Hanson Road, we saw a mixed flock of birds flitting through the trees. There were juncos, chickadees, woodpeckers, nuthatches, and some quick birds we didn't identify. Mike Clough of the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum up on Hogback Mountain had explained these mixed flocks a few weeks ago on a woodland hike he led. He said when the birds stick together, they move through an area eating pretty much everything available then move on. This is more efficient than a lot of small groups of birds, each species in its own group, moving through a forest and coming repeatedly across areas that have just been picked over. Although the larger mixed flock must share the food with more birds, less effort is wasted on areas that have little food that day.

One very special day I saw a yellow-crowned kinglet in the yard. It is a tiny beauty.



A couple of weeks ago, I gathered some friends together to visit with Patti Smith of the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center, BEEC.org, just over the town line in Marlboro. She took us up a mountain to a brook where we went to visit Dew the Beaver. We looked for her at a lower pond; no Dew. We looked for her at a second pond; no Dew. We looked for her at her uppermost pond; no Dew. We sat down to talk about the animals in the dark forest around us. The sun had long since set, and it was dark. Suddenly, one of the boys in the group sitting on the ground said, uh, Patti, there seems to be a very large mammal approaching me! And there she was: Dew the Beaver. Patti gave her an apple. – *Laurel Copeland*

THE DARK MONTH

The week before Thanksgiving marks the beginning of the last month of shortening days. From November 21 to the winter solstice on December 21, we will see daylight hours dwindle from 9 ½ hours to 9 hours and a minute or two, the seasonal flip side of those luxuriously long 15-hour days in late June. Sunset at 4:20, a very wintry event. Then dawn will begin to creep in earlier, day to day, as the planet still cools, giving us sparkling bright icy days in January and February. Until then, I say enjoy the early evening. Here we are, a group of friends on a mountain trail, sipping hot drinks and munching cookies by our campfire—at 5 pm!



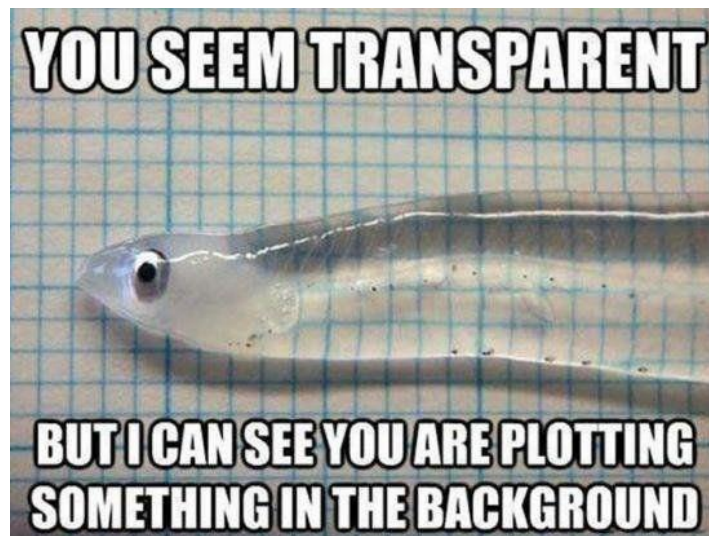
Phases of the Moon

Another interesting thing about this time of year is the location of the rising moon. While the sun rises and sets in more northern locations on the horizon in summer, and in more southern locations in winter, the moon shifts its location much more quickly, varying by season as well as by its phase. When the moon is full, it rises at sundown and sets at sunup. When the moon is new, it rises (as a black disc) at sunrise and sets with the sun. Meanwhile the sun is shifting its location gradually throughout the year, and the moon just has to keep up with it. “Ask An Astronomer” tabulates this variation in a succinct table:

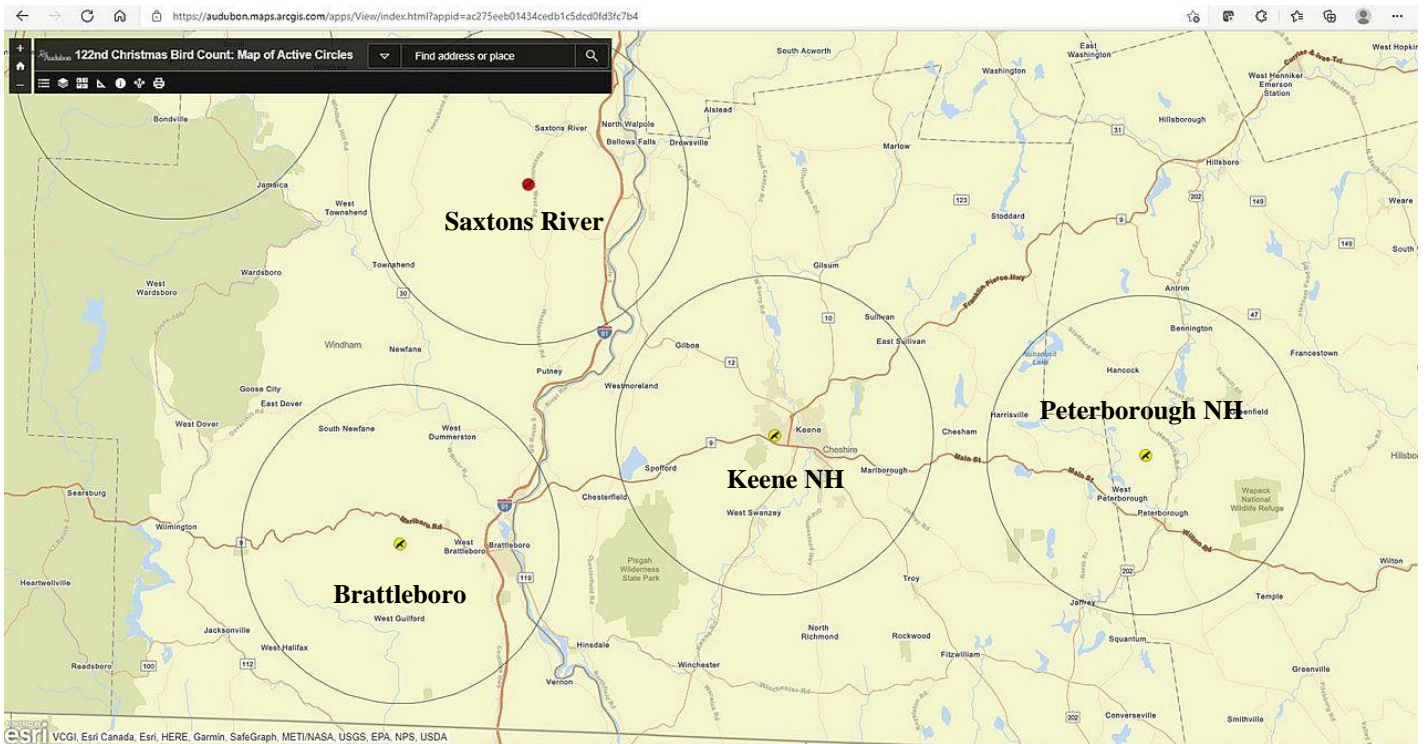
Season	Position of Moonrise/set			
	NEW	1st	FULL	3rd
Winter	Southeast/Southwest	East/West	Northeast/Northwest	East/West
Spring	East/West	Northeast/Northwest	East/West	Southeast/Southwest
Summer	Northeast/Northwest	East/West	Southeast/Southwest	East/West
Autumn	East/West	Southeast/Southwest	East/West	

<http://curious.astro.cornell.edu/about-us/46-our-solar-system/the-moon/observing-the-moon/128-how-does-the-position-of-moonrise-and-moonset-change-intermediate>

Just something to think about on long winter nights.



THE AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (CBC) is coming up. The Christmas Bird Count began on Christmas Day 1900 when ornithologist Frank M. Chapman proposed counting birds rather than shooting them during the holidays. The Christmas Bird Count runs December 14 through January 5 each year. Its 121 years of data have been used in myriad studies of bird population trends. Count #122 will be happening this month! Volunteers sign up on the Audubon website, <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>. You can participate with a local group or count birds on your feeder at home.



To find a group to join, go online and choose the link to the map. Zoom in on your locale. Here is a small part of the Audubon online map of CBC groups, showing 4 in the southern Vermont area. If you click on the yellow or red or green bird icon in the center of a circle, you will get your compiler's (organizer's) name and email address. The comments for the Brattleboro circle note that Cory Ross is the compiler, with Email address coryross24@gmail.com, the Count Date is 12/18/2021, and "If you would like to participate in the count please sign up by visiting <https://forms.gle/1PKaVeXcyKxKEy5C9>. This link can also be found on our website at www.sevtas.org You can join one of our seven area teams that will bird from sunrise on December 18th, or you can conduct a feeder count from home." Happy birding!

WILDLIFE. Help build a database of where **key mammals cross roads in Halifax** by reporting sightings of these animals or their scat on roads: **moose, black bear, bobcat, river otter, fisher**. If you see one on or crossing a road, or if you see tracks or scat that suggest one crossed the road, let me know (LaurelACopeland@gmail.com, 802-368-2439). Include **date, time, & location (address or landmarks or smart-phone photo of the location)**. Thank you! – Laurel

VETERANS and their families and caregivers can help save lives with blood donations and receive a gift card as a thank-you! The Marines are having their annual Marine Corps Toys for Tots Program. Discounts for Veterans and news are available online or in an emailed newsletter. See <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USVA/bulletins/2feb77>.

Newsletter
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Our Cat Is Ready for the Christmas Tree

Halifax News

DECEMBER 2021

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