

October 2021

HALIFAX NEWS

SALAD AT YOUR DOORSTEP

by Pam Baker, Halifax, Vermont

If you haven't gathered by now, based on my previous contributions this summer to the newsletter, finding tasty and useful plants in my dooryard is my hobby. Although I have read extensively and found a great many purposeful plants which I formerly considered weeds....I confess, I'm a bit of a chicken when it comes to trying new edible things. So far, I've only shared the things which I have direct and personal knowledge regarding use and identification and such. Anyone can look stuff up on the internet. You don't need a neighbor to regurgitate information that you can look up. But personal experience with something is more interesting and more valuable.

My very first wild edible that I ate was Wood Sorrel. I was probably about 8 or 9 years old, and someone told me the little yellow flower was edible, and I ate it. Kind of unbelievable if you know me. Most folks think this is a type of shamrock because of the leaves. It is classified, botanically, as genus *Oxalis*, of which there are several hundred species. When folks refer to a shamrock, that is usually one with a large white ball-type flower and the same type of leaves. I'm rather fond of shamrocks, considering my heritage, but that is not what I wanted to share with you this time.

Wood Sorrel or sourgrass (pictured at right) is everywhere. The little seed pods look like miniature okra. All parts are edible, and I have mostly eaten them raw. Added to salads, it perks up a boring plate. Full of Vitamin C, it is a tad sour; hence, one of its names, sourgrass. Because of its tang, sometimes it has been called lemony tasting. The sourness comes from oxalic acid, and every single article or information source, including this one....will caution readers not to consume a lot of it because it may aggravate the following conditions: gout, rheumatism, and kidney stones. But



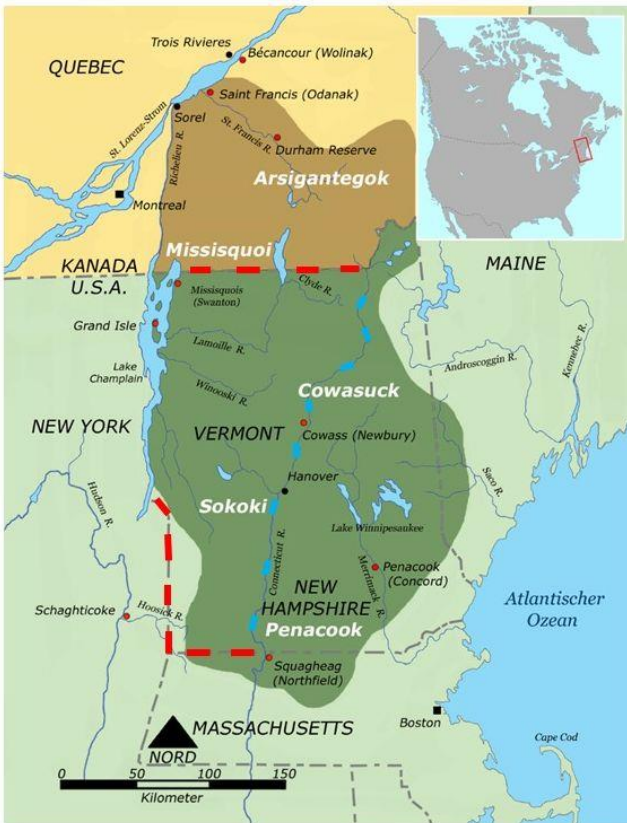
what none of the articles will tell you is...how much is a lot? And that is because there are too many factors to consider when answering that question. So if you suffer from one of those diseases, check with your physician or healthcare provider before consuming. That's my cue for my disclaimer: I am not a certified herbalist or botanist, nor am I attempting to provide medical advice. If you are not 110% certain of what you are gathering, then don't gather or consume. Finally, don't eat anything gathered alongside a road or on a lawn sprayed with chemicals, and always ask permission of the property owner before stepping foot on someone else's property.



Another sorrel, Sheep Sorrel, is also ubiquitous in our Vermont lawns. Although it is called a sorrel, it is technically not related to the above-mentioned Wood Sorrel. Sheep Sorrel is in the genus *Rumex*. Its nickname is sourweed. (They don't make it easy on us, do they?) However, it looks decidedly different from Wood Sorrel as you can see below. "Spear shaped" is how most references describe it. Harvest this "aggressively" as suggested by experts, as it grows by rhizome, and, therefore, killing it is almost impossible. I can attest to this as well. But it is a nutritious food to add to salads or sauces and also has a lemony flavor, again, that is likely due to the Vitamin C. And guess what? This also contains oxalates, so those with the aforementioned diseases, please use cautiously.

Who knew so much interesting food grew right in our dooryard? I have one more interesting item to share with you next month and then a short hiatus, as harvest time is nigh and days are fleeting, much like the sunshine this summer!

Happy Hunting and Gathering.



THE WESTERN ABENAKI people resided in Vermont before the arrival of Europeans. Their territories extended into Canada, New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts. The map at left superimposes current-day geopolitical boundaries of Canada and the New England states over the Abenaki lands.

Most Abenaki living in Vermont were killed or driven out by colonial expansion. Vermont recognized Abenaki tribes in the state in 2012.

Indigenous Peoples Day, celebrated on or near October 12th since 1992 and since 1990 as Native Americans Day in South Dakota, honors Native American people and their cultures and histories in our country.

On the map, the borders of the state of Vermont are shown as red (on land) and blue (on water) dashes.



BIRDS IN THE AIR

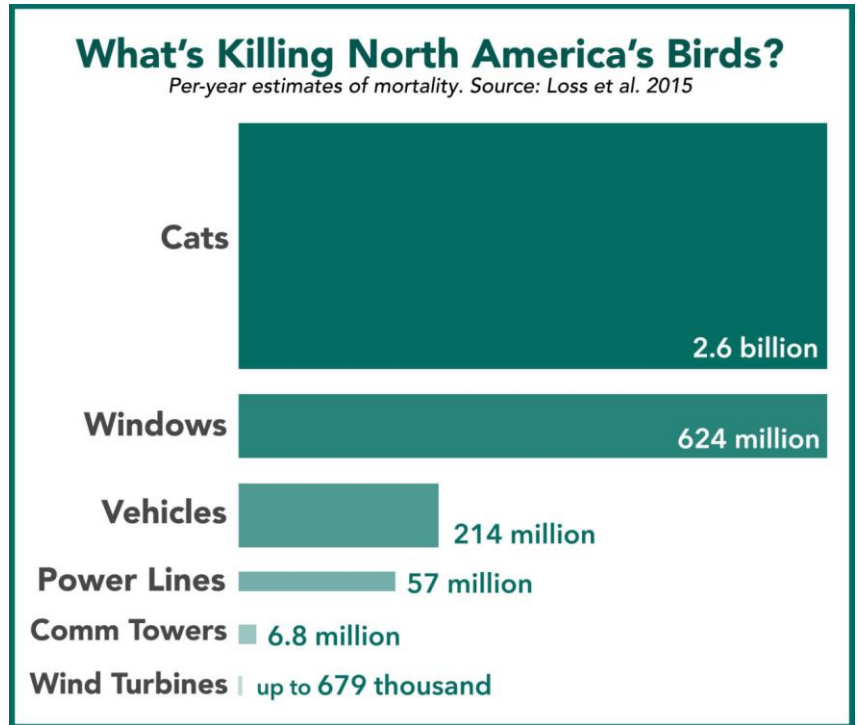
Migration is an amazing journey for many birds of North America. Yet these astounding journeys make spring and fall highly dangerous times of the year for birds in America and around the world. Among those embarking on their fall migration will be many young birds. These fledglings are only a few months old and must quickly learn how to survive across a perilous journey of thousands of miles.

In addition to the natural hazards of migration, birds increasingly face a range of human-caused perils (see illustration below from the Cornell Lab, <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/is-bird-migration-getting-more-dangerous>).

Estimates of annual bird deaths from specific human-related causes (other than habitat loss) in the United States and Canada identify (1) cats [2.6 billion bird deaths], (2) windows [624 million], (3) vehicles [214 million], (4) power lines [57 million], (5) communication towers [6.8 million], and (6) wind turbines [<1 million]. Source: [Loss, Will, & Marra, 2015](#).



Blue-headed Vireo



<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-ecolsys-112414-054133>

7 Ways to Help Birds

- Make Windows Safer, Day & Night
- Keep Cats Indoors
- Reduce Lawn, Plant Natives
- Avoid Pesticides
- Drink Coffee That's Good For Birds
- Protect Our Planet From Plastic
- Watch Birds, Share What You See

[Show Me More](#)

Blackpoll Warbler by Liron Gertman / Macaulay Library

Keeping cats indoors at all times, drinking bird-friendly coffee (the coffee trees are grown with diverse plants and at least 40% shade coverage), and making our windows visible in the daytime (but dark at night) are things we can do to help save birds. In daylight, birds crash into windows because they see reflections of vegetation or see through the glass to potted plants or vegetation on the other side. At night, nocturnal migrants (which include most songbirds) crash into lighted windows. Painting the outsides of your window panes with soap or tempera paint in lines 2 inches apart lets birds see the glass. More ideas are online, e.g., at <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/why-birds-hit-windows-and-how-you-can-help-prevent-it/>.

TOWN NEWS

OCT. 15: SENIOR MEAL. The next Senior meal is Friday, October 15 serving at noon at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax. Menu: chicken and biscuits, potato, veggie, roll and dessert. Eating the meal in the Community Hall is encouraged, but take-out is still available. Please call Joan at 802-368-7733 if you plan to attend. A free will donation of \$3.00 is asked but not mandatory. Hope to see you there.

HALIFAX CELEBRATION DAY. The day was blessedly cool, and everyone enjoyed the games, food, and chance to get together. The Children's Parade was a beautiful highlight of the day.



FIRE COMPANY REPORT.

September 8, men and one truck responded to a truck off the road on Rte. 112; there was no transport.

September 10, six men responded to a residence on Brook Road to help a man who had fallen; the ambulance transported him to Brattleboro Memorial Hospital.

September 19, two men responded to Thomas Hill; rescue was called but turned back as Halifax men were also en route. It was an untimely death. Our sympathy to the family and friends.

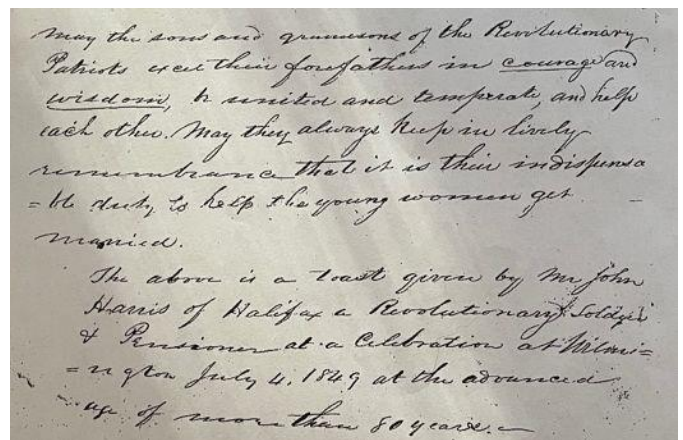
September 25, five men responded to a call of a woman fallen with a head injury on Hatch School Road. Deerfield Valley Ambulance transported her to the Brattleboro hospital.

REMEMBERING VERMONTERS LOST TO COVID-19

On September 19th at the Vermont state capitol, the Vermont Interfaith Action hosted a memorial service honoring Vermonters lost to COVID-19. Pictures, an oral report, and a transcription of that report are online at <https://www.vpr.org/vpr-news/2021-03-18/remembering-the-vermonters-lost-to-covid>.

VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS can sign up for a VA email newsletter for information about special discounts for veterans, such as free entrance to national parks and retail discounts, at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USVA/subscriber/new>.

TOWN HISTORY. Hugh Whitney of Marlboro called the other day. He had a quotation copied from an old Vermont Phoenix (date unknown), reporting on an historical event from July 4, 1849. The event was a toast given by Mr. John Harris of Halifax, a Revolutionary War Soldier and pensioner, at a celebration in Wilmington, Mr. John Harris then being "at the advanced age of more than 80 years." Here is the quotation: "May the sons and grandsons of the Revolutionary Patriots excel their forefathers in courage and wisdom, be united and temperate, and help each other. May they always keep in lively remembrance that it is their indisputable duty to help the young women get married."



HISTORY as presented by Edie Fenton in a 1985 newsletter. "The first apple tree and the first currant bush were brought from Colerain by a Mr. CLARK, and set ou[t] on the land now owned by a Joseph HENRY, Esq., near the geographical centre of the town, known as the WOODWARD Farm. The orchard on that place, a part

of which is still standing, is probably the oldest in the town.” This information was taken from the Vermont Historical Magazine, no date was on it. Also taken from Vermont Historical Magazine is this little goodie...“No town perhaps has been more famous for rum selling and rum drinking in a by-gone days, but for the last 30 years no merchant or inn-keeper has sold alcohol as a beverage in town.” [Source: Rev. Hubbard Eastman in the Vermont Gazetteer, https://sites.rootsweb.com/~vtwindha/vhg5/vt_gazetteer-halifax.htm]

SORROW

I am beyond sad to have to tell you all that we had to put our precious dog, Shadow, to sleep on September 13. He developed cancer on his tongue, and of course it got worse. He was with us for 13 and a half years. My heart

is beyond broken... 😞💔 ...as all you dog lovers know. We have been gifted a kitten, a cute little girl, who helps fill the void.....but, oh! how I miss my precious Shadow.

JOAN’S SIGHTINGS. There are not too many new birds at the feeders here in the village. I have seen a few Purple Finch—nearly all females; the Woodpeckers are still here, both Hairy and Downy. A few Blue jays a few Chickadees, White-throated Sparrows and White-Crowned Sparrows, Tufted Titmice now and then, White-Breasted Nuthatch and a Red-breasted one. Goldfinch—they have lost their beautiful yellow feathers, but I am glad to have them anyway! Also some Mourning Doves. I miss the Hummers but await the fall and winter birds. I have been fortunate to be able to attend the bird-banding events at Hogback as much as I can. They set nets and catch birds. The nets are checked every 15 minutes, so we get lots of exercise! The caught birds are brought to a table in the woods where they are examined very thoroughly by Eric Slayton who is very, very ‘bird-knowledgeable.’ The info is registered and shared online. Oh boy...what a thrill to be able to hold a live bird in your hands and release it after it has been banded!!! I have enjoyed all aspects of it this fall and hope to join them again in spring.

Send your sightings to Joan at jwcinvt@gmail.com

– Joan Courser



On Hanson Road, Z spotted a bright yellow goldfinch. This past month we saw hairy woodpeckers, common yellowthroat warblers, and hawks, heard sapsuckers, crows and barred owls, and laughed at the gang of turkeys that visits daily. The deer, porcupine, and foxes visited as did monarchs and dragonflies and bees, plus one skunk. A neighbor reported seeing bald eagles in Halifax! Meanwhile up at the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area, Eric Slayton has been conducting his fourth season of banding songbirds, most of whom are migrating in September. The titmouse does not migrate, but we netted one. In the photograph at left contributed by Jack Widness, a volunteer releases a titmouse—that grey blur on the upper right-hand quadrant. I guess that bird was done with us. – Laurel

WILDLIFE. A recent issue of *Science* magazine reported that 34 mammals have gone extinct in Australia since European colonization, due to predation by introduced species and habitat destruction.

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 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)**. Thank you!

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P O Box 27
West Halifax VT 05358



Halifax Celebration Day 2021



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Halifax News

OCTOBER 2021

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