June 2022

HALIFAX NEWS BIRDS!

Laurel Copeland, Halifax, Vermont

May brought final visits to vernal pools, our last snow flurries, and spring migratory songbirds! For the fifth time, Eric Slayton led a birdbanding project up on Hogback Mountain. The first season was May 2020 when he initiated the outdoor project to give people a valuable and safe activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. May and September are migration months and therefore our bird-banding seasons. As a certified bird-bander, Eric proposed the project and received a Federal Bird Banding and Marking Permit to conduct it from the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory (https://www.usgs.gov/labs/bird-banding-laboratory).



Four days a week throughout May, Eric and a handful of volunteers have opened a dozen mist nets then checked on them every 20-30 minutes, walking a loop trail up Mt Olga, across a bit of the Fire Tower Trail, and down through the woods to visit each net each time. Finding a bird in a net, someone would call "bird!" while another volunteer shook out a linen drawstring bag—inside out for bird safety—so Eric could painstakingly remove the bird from the fine netting and put it in the bag. The volunteers get to carry the birds once Eric has tied the bag closed. They also put a numbered clothes pin on the bag to identify the net in which the bird was caught. Back at the banding station, pictured above, Eric (left) measures the

bird's wing chord (length from the leading edge or wrist of the wing to the tip of the longest primary feather), blows on the feathers of its belly to see whether fat is stored and whether a brood patch or cloacal protuberance is present, and studies details of the feathers to determine sex. Birds that have similar coloring on males and females may be undetermined as to sex. Dimorphous species, such as the black-throated blue warbler, tend to be

easier to sex (see small pics of male and female black-throated blue warblers). Eric holds the bird up for us to take photographs then drops the bird gently into a PVC tube length to weigh it. Finally, he gently passes the bird to a volunteer for release. All these parameters are

recorded in his logbook by a data recorder (my role this time) for uploading later to the USGS site. There, these data become part of

CSGS Sic. The

a publicly available global database on banded birds.

Photo at right: Christa

"the Bird Whisperer" Hunter patiently waits for a Swainson's Thrush to take off from her left hand while listening to Eric talk about the cinnamon-colored bird—a Veery—he's holding.







Grey Catbird and Chestnut-Sided Warbler are pictured above. Shown below are a male Indigo Bunting, a Blue-Headed Vireo, a Ruby-Throated Hummingbird (not one we band! Eric just sets them free).



Birds are a beautiful and valuable part of our world. They scratch up soil, aerating it to the benefit of plants and tiny creatures. They add fertilizer and the occasional seed. Shorebirds carry nutrients from the sea to the land. Birds pollinate flowers including many fruit trees. And they eat insects—swallows consume 100s of flying insects per night, many birds eat farmland pests, and owls suppress rodent populations that may eat crops or carry ticks. Vultures clean up dead animals and convert them to fertilizer.

We in North America have lost billions of birds in the past 50 years—one quarter of our birds [https://www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50-years-new-study-says]. One of the biggest culprits under our personal control is the housecat. Keep your cat indoors. It doesn't need to eat wild rodents to be healthy—those transmit worms and toxoplasmosis anyway. Societally, we need to protect habitat from clearing and development and reduce pesticide use.

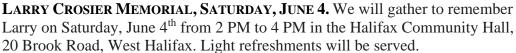
Birdbanding creates a record of what birds are where. As their numbers fade, these data may become both more useful in making projections and harder to come by.

Photo at right: A pair of yellow-bellied sapsuckers who chased each other right into a net.

Photo below: a Magnolia Warbler.



TOWN NEWS



CEMETERY WALK, SATURDAY, JUNE 11. Join us for a Cemetery walk on Saturday, June 11 at 10:00 am. Meet at the Community Hall, 20 Brook Road. Rain or Shine! Wear good walking shoes and bring water and bug spray. We plan to view West Halifax Cemetery, Halifax Center Cemetery, Pennell Hill Cemetery, ending in Niles Cemetery. Discussion will include what needs to be done to the cemeteries to clean them up, what needs to be improved, and where the money has been spent. We will talk about stone restoration and the repairs that need to be done. Some stones are smashed and irreparable and in need of being replaced. If you would like to join us on this walking/driving tour of these 4 cemeteries, please come! You will gain a good understanding of the condition of the Halifax Cemeteries and why we need more support financially. And we are always looking for volunteers. Contact Andrea Rand 802-368-7157 Leave a message and phone number on answering machine if no one picks up.

STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE DAY, SATURDAY, JUNE 18. The Halifax Historical Society and Halifax Community Club are jointly sponsoring a fundraiser on Saturday, June 18, at 1:30 pm.

SENIOR MEAL – FRIDAY, JUNE 17 The June meal is on June 17 at the Community Hall located at 20 Brook Road in West Halifax. We serve at noon. The menu is: baked chicken drumsticks, potato, vegetable, roll and dessert. All seniors are welcome. Please give Joan a call at 802-368-7733 so she knows you are coming. A donation of \$3 for the food is requested but not required.

FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS.

No Burning!!

IT'S TOO HOT & DRY.

5/4: one person responded to a call of a lady very upset because she thought she had Covid. Deerfield Valley rescue checked her out; she was fine.

5/9: two responded to a call where a man had smashed his hand.

5/10: 16 men and several mutual aid companies fought a **brush fire**.

5/10: Wilmington Fire Department put out a small **brush fire** in Halifax because they were 'covering' our station as all our department were at the first brush fire.

5/11: four Halifax men and some Colrain, MA men returned to the **brush fire** location to put out some hotspots.

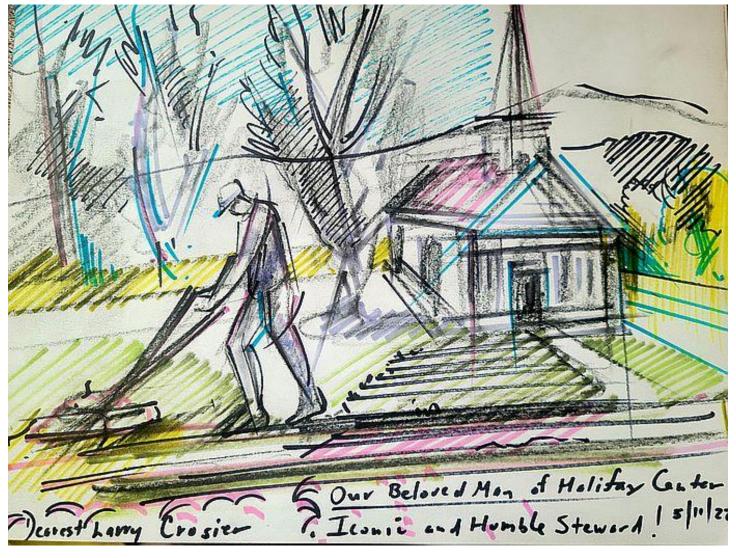
5/11: seven men responded to Cow Path 40 in Marlboro to help with a **brush fire**.

5/11: two men went to Wilmington station to 'cover' their station.

- 5/11: some men responded to a medical call for a man down; it was not a good ending.
- 5/11: two men responded to Cow Path 40 again but were turned back en route.
- 5/11: 15 men and three trucks responded to a **brush fire** again.
- 5/12: men responded to a **fire** in Readsboro.
- 5/12: two men again responded to Readsboro
- 5/12: seven men responded to a **brush fire** call on their return from Readsboro.
- 5/12: nine men responded to a call on Wheeler Road.
- 5/13: two trucks and seven men responded to a call on Route 9 in Marlboro
- 5/23: two men responded to a call on Route 112 for a lift assist.

SORROW

I am very sad to report the passing of Lawrence "Larry" Eugene Crosier on May 11, age 79. Artist David Brewster, a neighbor of Larry's in Halifax Center, sent the commemorative sketch shown below: "Dearest Larry Crosier, Our Beloved Man of Halifax Center—Iconic and Humble Steward!" Larry was born in Halifax on October 19, 1942, to Paul & Margaret (Hill) Crosier. He worked for the Halifax Highway Department, delivered mail with his wife Vera along the Jacksonville Stage route, repaired automobiles, and took care of mowing and plowing in Halifax Center. Our hearts go out to his family and many friends. Donations may be made to the Cael Scholarship Fund (Halifax Town Clerk/Treasurer, P O Box 127, W. Halifax VT 05358) or Senior Solutions Council on Aging for Southeastern Vermont (38 Pleasant St, Springfield VT 05156). A memorial gathering will be held on June 4th from 2 PM to 4 PM in the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax VT. Hope to see you there.



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GREEN-UP DAY in Vermont was **Saturday**, **May 7**, 2022. Man, did we pick up trash! Please do not litter... help keep Vermont verdant by picking up bottles, cans, cups, etc. along our roads.

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HALIFAX HISTORICAL SOCIETY & HALIFAX COMMUNITY CLUB. The HHS and the HCC joined forces on Saturday, May 28th, to put on the 2nd Annual Edie Fenton Plant Swap and an Open House at the Historical Society. The plant swap was at the historic Community Hall while the HHS open house was across the street and up a few steps in their historical building. Proceeds from the plant swap and open house (which offered yummy baked goods!) will help these two nonprofits maintain the two historical structures that grace West Halifax.

The officers of the HHS, who hosted the open house, wish to thank everyone who visited the museum. The outpouring of interest and support is greatly appreciated!

Joan commented, "Edie Fenton would have been so happy with the 'Edie' plant and flower swap / sale we had on the Community Hall lawn Saturday. It rained for a while, but it has done that each time we have held this event. Lots of people milling around and lots of plants there. It was an enjoyable day."

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SIGHTINGS. Oh wow, the birds are beautiful and coming to the feeders daily. Sometimes I have as many as four Baltimore Orioles. Oh, how I enjoy them! They love the treat of grape jelly at the feeder. I am sure they are finding plenty of the bugs that they thrive on and feed their young. I am still enjoying my pair of Cardinals. Also have a pair of Evening Grosbeaks. A few different Woodpeckers, a pair of Catbirds, several Sparrows and a pair of Blackbirds.

I was fortunate enough to be able to go to Hogback Mountain and help band birds that are caught in netsnever worrywe check the nets evert 15-30 minutes so they are never in the nets very long! I believe there are 8 or more nets. It is beyond awesome to be able to hold a wild bird in your hands!! I have learned so very much from Eric Slayton, the fellow that does the banding. I also have met many new people. We do it in spring and fall. I love it!

- Joan Courser

Elsewhere Around Town. Andrea & Gary Rand saw a large moose in the area! Dov Towler's son spotted it, too, down by the Green River.

Up on Hanson Road the migrating and courting passerines are singing beautifully every dawn. Using the Merlin Bird Sound ID app on my smartphone, I hear at dawn the fast-singing winter wren, eastern phoebe, black-capped chickadee, common yellowthroat warbler, black-throated green warbler, chestnut-sided warbler, black and white warbler, robin, wood thrush, hermit thrush, blue-headed vireo, ovenbird, red-breasted nuthatch, song sparrow, chipping sparrow, field sparrow, red-winged blackbird, yellow-bellied sapsucker, blue jay, goldfinch, and tufted titmouse. At night the barred owl hoots. A grey fox visits regularly, although not at the same time as the rabbit and voles and moles. There are toads and garter snakes in the grass and tadpoles in the roadside puddles. I'm seeing butterflies, too—big yellow swallowtails and little sulphurs, luxurious brown mourning cloaks. Last night I saw fireflies. Hot weather is upon us.

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TICKS—THEY'RE HERE. I pulled a tick off my ribcage the other day. I used tweezers and pulled very slowly to avoid tearing the insect. Use bug dope and cover your bare skin! Protect yourself with repellents containing DEET or picaridin (20% concentration, not less). Pull socks or boots over your pants cuffs to cover your ankles.

Clothes can be treated <u>in advance</u> with permethrin, but you have to let it dry for several hours or it won't do you any good. Permethrin does not repel prevent ticks from landing on you (like DEET and picaridin); it makes the ticks jump off after they

land. https://www.healthvermont.gov/disease-control/tickborne-diseases/information-ticks-vermont

Newsletter P O Box 27 West Halifax VT 05358



Joan Courser holds a Black-capped Chickadee

Halifax News

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Goslings with their parents on Addisons' pond