

March 2023

## HALIFAX NEWS

### ASH AND OTHER TREES

– *Laurel A Copeland, Halifax, Vermont*



On Hogback Mountain. Photo: Lynn Redd

February has been a treat, has it not? From -20F to +55F, from mud season #3 to piles of snow—thank goodness for the snow for local snow-dependent businesses! The long days of winter lend themselves to reading and discovering new information. I love walking in the snowy woods, too, but when it's dark, I'm indoors by the fire. Recently, I've been thinking about trees.

Our tree warden, Sue Kelly, recently completed the Halifax Ash Tree Inventory, cataloging ash trees along our roads with help from the Conservation Commission. The question of how to use this information necessarily comes up. Some also wonder, why should we cut trees down before they are dead?

I looked into this question from the point of view of the professionals—the people who cut down trees. Keep in mind that Vermont forests are primarily populated with maple, beech, and birch trees. Sugar maples make up close to 20% of Vermont's 3.4 billion trees. Only 5% of trees in Vermont are ash trees, a mere 150 million trees. But they are widely scattered throughout our woods and line every road in Halifax.

### Lumberjack Hazards from EAB

Ash trees that are infested by emerald ash borer become extremely brittle and break easily as they decline. Branches can fall on people and property in snowstorms, with a light breeze, or even on a calm clear day. Danger could be hanging over your head in the street, in the forest, and even in your backyard.

### Why Does Emerald Ash Borer Make Ash Trees So Brittle?

Unlike elms, oaks, and maples, ash trees use a thin ring of conducting tissue to supply water from the roots to the entire tree. Emerald ash borer grubs will damage these functional water pipes as they chew just beneath the bark inside trunks and branches. This chewing causes the tree to dry quickly and the structural wood to become prone to cracking. Internal breaks in structural wood are often hidden from view by tree bark. So limbs can break and fall at any point along the branch at any time. It is not uncommon to have sizable limbs snap 30 feet off the ground on a calm day.



### What Makes EAB-Infested Trees So Dangerous?

The strength and structural integrity of ash trees begins to decline as soon as the tree becomes infested. The tree may still have plenty of leaves growing, although the crown tends to die off first (see picture). Emerald ash borers cause the tree to dry out internally. Low moisture content makes it more likely that branches and trunk will break, and the timing of breaks is unpredictable. An ash tree's trunk may fail completely soon after death, putting people and property at risk. Climbing such a tree is extremely hazardous.

Many professional tree services won't let their arborists climb trees that show even a 20% decline from EAB, so taking out trees after infestation requires the use of expensive equipment. Removing an infested tree may cost twice as much as removing a healthy tree, and removing a dead tree may cost three times as much.

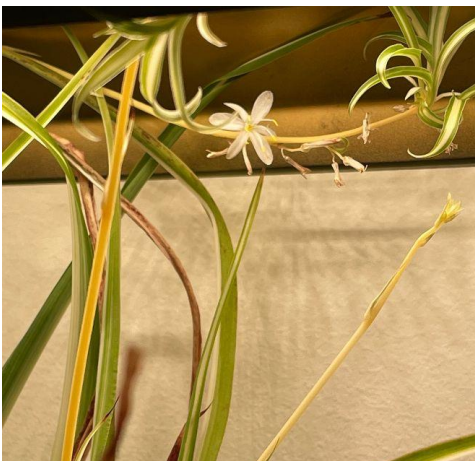
### Statistically, America's Deadliest Career Path

Without the added hazards from EAB, lumberjacking is already dangerous. Since 1992, the federal government's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has kept data on work-related deaths and injuries. Over 22 years, an average of 5,650 U.S. workers perished each year on the job or due to injuries incurred on the job. In general, thanks to the implementation of stricter safety regulations, these fatalities are on a slow, gradual decline. BLS went through its most recent (2013) data and ranked jobs by death rate per 100,000 workers. Out of hundreds of jobs, loggers are statistically the most likely to die due to work-related injuries:

Loggers	91 per 100,000 fulltime workers
Fishermen	75 per 100,000 fulltime workers
Aircraft Pilot/Engineers	51 per 100,000 fulltime workers
Roofers	39 per 100,000 fulltime workers
Garbagemen & Recycling Collectors	33 per 100,000 fulltime workers
Mining Machine Operators	27 per 100,000 fulltime workers
Truck Drivers	22 per 100,000 fulltime workers
Farmers & Ranchers	22 per 100,000 fulltime workers
...All Workers (Average)	3.2 per 100,000 fulltime workers



Photos clockwise from top left:  
 Lots of snow requires lots of digging power.  
 Moonscape at Fisher's pond.  
 My spider plant bloomed (!?!).  
 Walking iris.  
 A thickening mid-leaf portends formation of another walking iris blossom.



## INVASIVE BUCKTHORN

In spite of the wintry weather, spring is near. We will soon have bulbs poking through the leaf debris and delicate tree flowers jettisoning pollen into the air. Other plants growing around us are less admirable, are, in fact, invaders in our woods and fields. Buckthorn is a prime example: changing soil chemistry, poisoning animals, and choking out native plants. Buckthorn is bad.

There are actually two invasive buckthorn species in Vermont: Common Buckthorn and Glossy Buckthorn.

They were brought to America as ornamental plants for gardens. Then they escaped. Buckthorn is a deciduous shrub or small tree that grows 6 to 25 feet tall. It forms thickets that dominate nearby plants. The bark is dark grey to blackish-brown with white lenticels (bumpy, gas-exchanging pores) and bright orange or lemon-yellow inner bark (you will see this when you cut the tree). Leaves are dark green, oval, 1.5 to 3 inches long, slightly serrate (sawtoothed) with 3 or 4 pairs of curving veins and a somewhat folded tip. The color is deeper in Glossy Buckthorn compared to Common Buckthorn; see photo from The Buckthorn Project (<https://buckthornproject.org>).



In the spring, buckthorn leafs out early, making it easy to spot. Buckthorn produces inconspicuous little flowers: yellow-green, 4-petal flowers in Common Buckthorn and star-shaped, greenish white 5-petal flowers in Glossy Buckthorn. In the winter, look for the dark blue/purple berries that persist on the branches, and the darker grey-brown bark with prominent white spots.

- Common or Purging Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) is “cathartic” in the sense that it is an emetic and laxative (makes you toss your cookies, etc.); it is also poisonous. This plant favors wet or moist habitat, making it a threat to riverbanks and wetlands as well as forests. Common Buckthorn is non-spiny.
- Glossy Buckthorn twigs are usually tipped with a sharp spine (beware!). Common buckthorn resembles chokecherry, but chokecherries (the fruit) are smaller and redder than the black fruits of the buckthorn. Buckthorn fruits are small, black berries about 1/4 inch in diameter.

We now know that Common Buckthorn can form dense thickets, suppressing native plants and changing soil chemistry. It can also poison animals. This toxicity and the buckthorn’s continued spread in Vermont earned buckthorn’s listing on Vermont’s Noxious Weed Quarantine.

### What to Do

- Common buckthorn typically "leafs out" early, so look for it in spring. Pull young plants out by hand; cut out larger plants and cover the stumps with black plastic or tin cans (nailed down on stump).
- Because of the high risk of spread by seeds, treatments are most effective before the plants go to seed.
- Bag and dispose of fruits to prevent seed dispersal during management activities.
- Follow-up treatments will be needed for at least 5 years because of the seed bank in the soil.
- Any removed plants are best left on site in a manner that allows roots to dry out and decompose.
- If pulling or digging, remember that soil disturbance can encourage growth from the seed bank.
- Seeds can be burned with a blow torch.
- Revisit all sites annually.
- <https://vtinvasives.org/news-events/news/spotlight-common-buckthorn>

## TOWN NEWS

### TOWN MEETING DAY IN HALIFAX – TUESDAY, MARCH 7, AT 10:00 AM

Halifax Elementary School Multipurpose Room, 246 Branch Road, in West Halifax, Vermont. Be sure to vote! All agenda items can be voted on in person at the Town Meeting. Office holders can be voted on in person or by absentee ballot. See the warning at <https://halifaxvt.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Warning-Annual-Town-Meeting-March-7-2023.docx.pdf> and a sample ballot at <https://halifaxvt.com/warning-for-town-meeting-day/>.

### SENIOR MEAL IN HALIFAX – FRIDAY, MARCH 17, AT 12:00 NOON

Friday March 17 is the next meal at the Halifax Community Hall, 20 Brook Road, West Halifax, Vermont. We serve at noon. Menu: New England boiled dinner (corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, turnips, and onions (onions on the side), cornbread, rolls, and dessert. All seniors are welcome. A free-will donation of \$3.00 is asked (\$4 for under-60). A call to Joan is appreciated 802-368-7733. We started Halifax Senior Meals 23 years ago with this menu. It is one of the favorites. – Joan Courser

### TOWN PROJECTS – SATURDAY, MARCH 25, 2023, 11:00 AM – 1:30 PM

Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation and the Town of Halifax are hosting a Community Meeting at the Halifax School Multipurpose Room, 246 Branch Road, West Halifax.

**Lunch will be provided. RSVP so we get a good head count for lunch.**

To RSVP, email Roza ([halifaxsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:halifaxsecretary@gmail.com)) or call Patty at the Town Office at 802-368-7390.

The flyer for the event is posted on the town website with a link to a down-loadable file of ideas generated so far. Visit <https://halifaxvt.com/> and scroll down to a link that says “Halifax CAPP Projects Sheet” above the flyer that looks like this one with the colorful raised hands (see picture at right).

### JOAN’S SIGHTINGS.

Someone told me they saw a Robin! It is certainly out of its element with all of our snow, and we seem to have lots of snowy days; hopefully it is doing okay. Someone else told me years ago that if you have a Robin in winter with snow on the ground, you should put out some canned dog food for it. I guess that is as good as worms (maybe better)!

Wayne has not seen many wild turkeys lately. I would guess it is more difficult for them to get around. I told him to send them to our place. I have plenty of corn to give them. Two came and visited before I had the corn, but they have not returned. I wish they would! My feeders are busy...two pair of Cardinals, lots of Evening Grosbeaks, a few Sparrows, enough Blue jays (really I like to see them but they are bossy and hungry) ...but also beautiful. A couple of Downy Woodpeckers, and a Hairy, and something that does a loud hammering I hear but don't see. I also see what I think is a Red-Bellied woodpecker. Starlings, a few Nuthatches, Red-breasted and White-breasted. I know I may seem crazy, but I am seeing what sure looks very much like a Wren with a distinct white eye stripe. I see it every day but am not sure what it is. I hear Crows making a racket too.

I had two Red-tailed Hawks flying around over our place; they sure made the chickens nervous !! And my favorite: the Chickadees. Seeing a few fox tracks in the snow down around the barn and chicken coop. Really like the wildlife!

# HALIFAX COMMUNITY MEETING

SAT MARCH 25, 11AM-1:30 PM



HALIFAX SCHOOL MULTIPURPOSE ROOM  
FREE LUNCH SERVED

## HELP BRAINSTORM PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE OF HALIFAX!

A starting list of projects is up at [www.halifaxvt.com](http://www.halifaxvt.com). Add your ideas for:

- Community Spaces
- Climate Resilience
- Services for Families
- Activities for Youth
- Anything Else...

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The big surprise is I have several Red-Winged Blackbirds!! A nice sign of Spring...although the weather is telling me otherwise!  
I am looking forward to 'in person' town meeting...March 7th at the W. Halifax school gym at 10 AM. Looking forward to seeing Halifax friends I don't see very often. – Joan Courser

**Elsewhere Around Town.** I was very excited to spot an animal on the ice of Gates Pond! This one looked chunky, though, unlike the sleek river otters I spy from time to time. It was a beaver! In broad daylight, sitting on the ice beside a hole (photo). Perhaps it was resting from repairing its dam. Up on Hanson Road, we have seen Pileated Woodpeckers and listened to coyotes yipping as they pass by in the night. Fox tracks appear after every snow from the grey foxes forming families in the surrounding woods. The cats alert us to ever-present rodents.

– Laurel Copeland

**Moon Phases Seen from The Arctic Circle**

Far up north, above the Arctic Circle, the moon is above the horizon for about two weeks, then below the horizon for about two weeks.



(Right: houseplants wait for the color of spring)

**FIRE DEPARTMENT NEWS.**

- On January 26, three men assisted the ambulance and plowed the driveway.
- On January 29, five men and one truck responded to Rowe, MA, to a second-alarm barn fire.
- On February 1, two men assisted a 71-year-old male who had fallen. The ambulance responded, but the person refused transport.
- On February 6, two men responded to a tree and wires down. No wires were in the road, so responders waited for the power company.
- On February 7, two trucks and 13 men responded to a motor vehicle accident on Route 112, a truck backed into a ditch. The crew waited for a tow truck to arrive.
- On February 9, five men responded to a search for a missing dog. The dog had been hit by a car and run away from home. Later it was found a few miles from home with some injuries. The dog is now home recuperating.
- On February 12, one man responded to a call for an ill woman. Ambulance transported her to hospital.
- On February 16, two men responded to a woman not feeling well. There was no transport.
- On February 22, two men responded to an ill woman; she was transported to a Greenfield, MA, hospital.
- On February 24, 10 men responded a mutual aid call and fire alarm sounding in Rowe, MA. The house was quite damaged. Two cats lost their lives, but a third cat escaped.



**Monthly Fire Department 50/50 raffle: Buy tickets (\$10 each) from any fireman**

- Emergency services — call 911
- New Suicide & Crisis Lifeline — call 988
- Veterans Crisis line — call 988 then press 1, or text 838255



**WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT**

**Have you seen any of these 5 animals crossing a road?** As part of a wildlife connectivity project, I am interested in where five wide-ranging mammals cross the road. 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](mailto:LaurelACopeland@gmail.com), 802-368-2439). Include **date, time, & location**. The 5 animals are **Moose, River Otter, Fisher, Black Bear, and Bobcat**.



Newsletter  
P O Box 27  
West Halifax VT 05358



At a VAST Crossroads



February Sunrise

# Halifax News

MARCH 2023

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Joan [JWCinVt@gmail.com](mailto:JWCinVt@gmail.com)  
(PO Box 27, 05358).