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# The St. George Journal

## connecting people and the natural world

from the Friends of St. George



### March

The energy and anticipation that carried us through the early winter months of Nov/Dec/Jan, with their mix of feast days and promise of silence and contemplation, begins to drain away. The easy part is over.

The tangible realities of the long haul through Feb/ March /April begin to accumulate an almost atomic weight as winter declares, “This is my time and I and shall not be rushed.” So we humans shift the weight of it like a backpack grown too heavy and walk on through the winter mix, power outages, canceled events, and gatherings, and hunker down for the long haul through March, poised on the cusp of the Vernal Equinox, the return of Daylight Savings Time and whatever else quixotic March may bring.

The season and times through which we are passing challenge us and the natural world on all levels. We are invited to call upon our inner resources, look to our values, and turn our faces toward the sun and those small things each of us can do to keep ourselves, those we care about, and the larger world, whole and well through this long winter.

Among the many comforts of winter - soups & stews, time with friends and family, a good book, dreaming gardens, and finally getting to some of those long-delayed projects - just beyond our frosted windows, the

["This is a time of miracles and wonders . . ."](#)

Be well, happy and connected  
Wende Mcilwain, Editor

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**We are a monthly publication**, so each issue will be long and meant for you to browse and savor over the month.

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Please help us shape the SGJ by emailing  
your feedback to us at  
[friendsofstgeorgeme@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofstgeorgeme@gmail.com)

- What features do you like the best?
- What else would you like to see on these pages?
- Are you an artist or writer who would like to work with us?
- Your suggestions for topics or ideas are most welcome.

We love feedback - thank you!

## From Friends of St. George

### **Primary Day - Tuesday, March 3rd**

Voting is a birthright to be exercised. Please VOTE!

The polls are open 8am to 8pm

### **Neighbor to Neighbor will give you a ride if you need it. 207-691-7069**

This is your chance to cast a vote to select the Presidential candidate of your choice to run in November, and to vote on **Question 1**:

**Some clarification on Question 1**, which is worded in a manner that makes it confusing. You might find this link helpful.

[https://ballotpedia.org/Maine\\_Question\\_1,\\_Religious\\_and\\_Philosophical\\_Vaccination\\_Exemptions\\_Referendum\\_\(March\\_2020\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Maine_Question_1,_Religious_and_Philosophical_Vaccination_Exemptions_Referendum_(March_2020))

**This is the exact wording of Question 1:**

**"Question 1: People's Veto**

*employees of nursery schools and health care facilities?"*

**A YES Vote:** will result in the law staying the same, allowing some students to attend school without being immunized due to religious or philosophical reasons.

**A NO Vote:** will result in this law being overturned, requiring that all students be immunized in order to attend school.



### **A Transitional Moment**

As Anita Siegenthaler steps back on the civic and FOSG fronts, to focus her prodigious energies more on her personal and family life, we want to take this moment to thank her for her decades of service to both the FOSG and the St. George community. Fortunately for us, Anita remains an active Board member and contributor to the FOSG and the St. George Journal. Anyone who knows her knows how dedicated and committed Anita is to the wellbeing of the natural world and our community. She has been at the heart of FOSG since its founding in 2002 as part of an effort to retain traditional public access to Martinsville Beach. Since then, largely thanks to Anita's tireless efforts, FOSG has become a respected community organization working quietly behind the scenes. It was Anita who wrote and sent out all those timely bulletins of calendar events and led the FOSG in supporting and co-sponsoring more than 50 events with the Conservation Commission. Not only has she been faithfully attending CC meetings for decades, but Anita also took it upon herself to advertise these events with fliers and well-placed pieces in local papers, as well as organize refreshments and the setup and breakdown of the room. All of us who have benefited from your vision, leadership and hard work thank you, Anita.

*Del Welch, Treasurer*  
*Anita Siegenthaler, Secretary*  
*Sandra Roak, At large*

#### **Newsletter Support**

*Peg Fields*  
*Alane Kennedy - St. George CDC*  
*Sandra Roak - School liaison*  
*Anita Siegenthaler - Content*  
*Ancho Honey, Sponsor of Where in St. George*  
*Photos by WMci unless otherwise attributed*



Fire & Ice

## Calendar of Events

*Anita Siegenthaler/Wende McIlwain*

**Tuesday, March 3, Noon, Merryspring Nature Center, Conway Rd., Camden, "Coffee- from Crop to Cup":** Meredyth Lynn of Rock City Coffee will show how coffee travels from the farmer through processors to the daily cup. Meredith started at Second Read Books & Coffee in 2009, then worked at a

[www.merryspring.org](http://www.merryspring.org).

**Tuesday, March 10, Noon, Merryspring Nature Center, Conway Rd., Camden, "Entomology of Fly Fishing":** Even if you don't fish, learning about the insects that flit around water bodies attracting fish, and fishermen, will be fascinating. U. of Maine Cooperative Extension expert Clay Kirby, a well-know "bug" man, will present. Members free. Others: \$5. Info: [www.merryspring.org](http://www.merryspring.org).

**March 14, 2 pm - 4 pm, Camden Library,**

**"David Spahr on Chaga":** This native fungus is now being seen in products ranging from tea to beer. Learn biology and what makes it special to human beings from this mycologist and author. Info: [www.librarycamden.org](http://www.librarycamden.org).

**Saturday, March 14, 5 pm, The Strand Theater, Rockland, "[Rockland Bicentennial Birthday Bash](#)":** Family fun and an opportunity to hear [John Bear Michell](#), a Penobscot Nation storyteller, share the deep connection between land and native people.

**Tuesday, March 17, Noon, Merryspring Nature Center, Conway Rd., Camden, "Health Benefits of Blueberries":** Dorothy Klimis. [www.merryspring.org](http://www.merryspring.org).

**Tuesday, March 17, 7 pm - 8:30 pm, Camden Library,**

**"Global Warming: Moving Beyond the Problem to Solutions:** Co-director of the Center for Ecological Living and Learning, David Oakes, will discuss theories about how climate change is exacerbated by human activity. He will share experience gleaned from work in environmental education in this country and abroad.

The presentation will focus on solutions and include time for audience participation.

**Tuesday, March 24, 7 pm - 8 am, Avena Botanicals, 2nd-floor Healing Room, 219 Mill St., Rockport**  
**New Moon Meditation:** Sara Vesta and Deb Soule lead 20-minute silent meditation followed by a brief optional sharing of intentions for the month ahead. A different plant allay (flower essences, etc.) is to be introduced in each session. Chairs are available or bring your own meditation cushion. Free. For more information: [www.avenabotanicals.com](http://www.avenabotanicals.com).

**Tuesday, March 24, Noon, Merryspring Nature Center, Conway Rd., Camden, "Birds, Flowers, and Song":** Gary Roberts. [www.merryspring.org](http://www.merryspring.org).

**Tuesday, March 24, 7 pm - 8:30 pm, Camden Library, "Permaculture & Regenerative**

**Food Systems":** Wonder what permaculture is? Rockland-based Jesse Watson explores the possibilities for growing our own food and healing the ecosystem at the same time. Permaculture design principles and methods will be illustrated by some case studies in Maine. Mr. Watson teaches permaculture design certificate courses with The Resilience Hub and Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Assn.

**Wednesday, March 25, 6:30 pm, Maine Coast Islands NWR, R9 Water Street, Rockland, "Be Safe Out There Series; Ticks" [www.maineoastalislans.org](http://www.maineoastalislans.org).**

**The theme for Earth Day 2020 is climate action.** The enormous challenge — but also the vast opportunities — of action on climate change have distinguished the issue as the most pressing topic for the 50th anniversary. More information about Earth Day is available at <https://www.earthday.org/about-us/>.

**Tuesday, April 28, 6:30-8 pm, Blueberry Cove Camp, Harts Neck Road, "Gardening for a Better Planet" with Keely Corbin**, ecological landscape designer, and consultant.

Simple and effective strategies to apply in our home landscapes that can help pollinators, create habitat, reduce our carbon footprints, and improve water quality. Our yards are places where we can show our care for the Earth in ways that make a real impact. Kelly advocates for a “work smarter, not harder” approach to gardening and lawn care that can also decrease the amount of time and effort it takes to maintain them! Our yards are places where we can show our care for the Earth in ways that make a real impact.

## Follow Up

### Sea Level Rise



Sea Level Rise  
St. George, ME

The Ad-hoc SLR committee

The SLR workshop convened at the town hall on Saturday, February, 29th, drawing a broad spectrum of approximately 20 concerned townspeople, including representatives from town committees and government, the Business Alliance, the working waterfront community, the Marshall Point Lighthouse, and Representative Anne Matlack, to name a few, to grapple with the exhaustive Maine Flood Resilience Checklist, ably facilitated by Letitia van Vuuren from Knox County EMA and Bill Najpauer from the Midcoast Economic Development District.

A very positive conversation was had, with general agreement about the ongoing threat of sea-level rise and the need for a plan to address it. Sandra Roak generously provided the coffee and goodies that fueled the 4-hour workshop. The facilitators will analyze the workshop results and report to town officials and the SLR committee for further action. Stand by for more updates.



### **Followup on Betsy Blackmer's article, " A Commons"**

In our last issue, Betsy wondered what effect cigarette butts might be having on the environment of the roadside verge. As it turns out the answer is a very dramatic and harmful one, leaching nicotine and heavy metals into the soil, and as a major source of microplastic pollution.

[Read more](#)

### **Apple Tree Pruning and the Fine Art of the Winter Bonfire**

The February 15th Conservation Commission sponsored event drew a hardy crowd despite temperatures in the single digits. Old apple trees were liberated, brush hauled, and bodies warmed by hot cider and proximity to a very fine bonfire.



Lopper and saws at attention!

## New on the Scene



The St. George CDC has recently formed a committee to explore ways to expand the use of solar energy in St. George. This follows the successful installation of solar panels on the Transfer Station two years ago to power the Town Offices, and the passage of L.D. 1711 by the Maine Legislature last year which expanded incentives available for solar energy installations in Maine.

The goals of the committee are to:

1. Support new construction for residences, commercial places, and the school.
2. Begin to explore the development of one or more community solar farms.
3. Educate the community on the advantages of solar power.
4. Look for any disincentives and seek to remove them.

The next meeting of the committee is Monday, March 2 at 5:30 PM at the CDC offices at 47 Main Street in Tenants Harbor. If you are interested in joining the committee or have questions, please contact either Alane Kennedy at the CDC ([alane@stgeorgecommunity.org](mailto:alane@stgeorgecommunity.org)) or John McIlwain ([jmcilw@gmail.com](mailto:jmcilw@gmail.com)) Or just come to the next meeting.

### **Duck Eggs on the Road**



A new source of organic, free-range eggs just appeared on the Port Clyde Road next to the Drift Inn Beach parking lot. You will find a self serve cooler full of Silver Appleyards duck eggs, along with a detailed handout telling you all about the ducks and their eggs.



**What's happening at the corner of Factory Road and the Marshall Point Road?**



**Does anybody know?**

**Around the Peninsula**



Just in case you haven't noticed, there's somethin' new in town as the handsome, future home of the [Monhegan Boat Line](#), ticket office and Sea Star Shop rise on the dock in Port Clyde. Congratulations to Andy and Amy. We are assured that it is not going to be YELLOW! Watch for some nice cedar shakes to go on . . .



## **Hedgerow Diary**

No introduction is needed to long time residents and wearer of many hats, all of them deeply rooted in community and place.

We are delighted that Anne Cox, co-creator of [Hedgerow](#), artist, landscape designer, thinker of thoughts, etc., will be coming to you with her reflections in each issue.

### **The Story of the Big Fig**



A number of years ago — at least ten, maybe more — I was outside working in the raised bed garden near the house when I saw my neighbor, Steve Barnes, driving his lawn tractor on 131, towing a small tree. He turned the corner up Ridge Road and drove to the garden where I was working. “Do you want this fig?” he asked. “We are tired of hauling it in and out of the cellar each year.” (Figs are not likely to survive outside in our climate, especially not those in pots, like this one.)

That Fall was the year we put up our first greenhouse. It was a small structure, about 8’ x 8’, and I thought that tugging the fig into the greenhouse for winter protection seemed easier than going up and down the steep cellar stairs. So in it went. I left it in the greenhouse the next spring and summer, and it bore a few figs — something that Steve had said it had never done during its seasonal journeys.

I decided to leave the fig in the greenhouse year-round, thinking that the additional warmth was what caused it to bear fruit. The next year, we had more figs than even I could consume, and so I relented and started sharing them. This went on for several years, and I began to realize that the vigor and productivity of the fig, still in its pot, was that its roots had snaked out through the holes in the bottom of the pot, and were spreading through the crushed stone and soil under the greenhouse.

Then we built a new and larger greenhouse close to the old one. We took down the first greenhouse, which meant the fig needed to move again, into the new house. We even added an extra four feet in the new greenhouse, just to accommodate the fig. When it came time for the move, we had to cut the pot off the fig and then cut those long roots that had been sustaining the plant. There were six roots, all at least eight feet long. Ouch. I knew the move was going to hurt, so I cut back the branches of the fig as well so that it

That first year in the new greenhouse, the fig leafed out but didn't produce much in the way of fruit. Fair enough: it had been traumatized. And then there was a fateful decision I made when a visitor brought two new figs, different varieties, and suggested that I might like to try these and overwinter them as well. The problem is that these two figs, as far as my horticultural sleuthing has led me to discern, brought in rust, a fungal disease. Rust thrives in hot, moist environments, as in a greenhouse. And soon the great fig had rusty orange spots all over its leaves and little wizened fruits. It looked awful. So I worked at treating the three figs with copper fungicide, and a fan on them for better air circulation. No figs that year. I beat back the rust a bit, but still, the figs were all affected and looked pathetic. The next year I got smart and got rid of the two smaller interlopers to focus on healing the great fig.

Success. Last year the fig recovered. The fig crop was good. (Chipmunks, by the way, figured out that figs are tasty treats.) This winter, I didn't heat the greenhouse at all until seed starting time the end of January, and just hoped that the fig would survive. The fig is fine, bolstered, I imagine, by the fact that its roots have had plenty of time to spread under the greenhouse and beyond. Its buds started swelling in early February, and all looks healthy.

Morrie and Steve have both visited the great fig. Morrie figures it is more than fifty years old, as he had it before he moved to Maine. There are a few cuttings thriving in homes around the midcoast, and the great fig lives on. I am hoping, if I can stay ahead of the chipmunks, that is, to have plenty of figs to share this year.



### **Peninsular Creatures:**

We offer you another new feature column from Hugh Blackmere, scholar, trash collector, photographer, Mindbender . . .

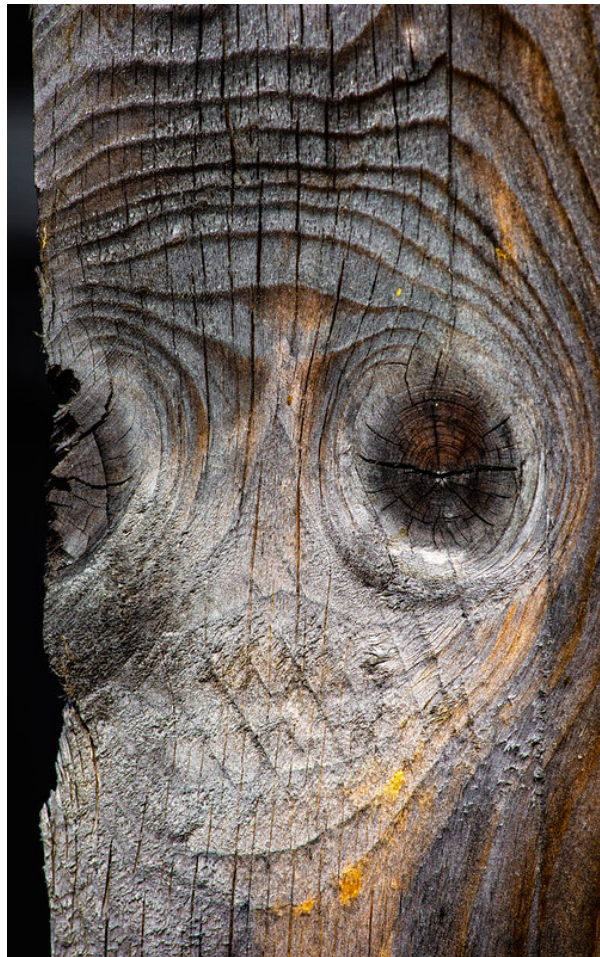
Pareidolia is where you find it



In Greek, 'eidōlon' is an image, a form, a shape; 'para' means beside or instead of. And 'pareidolia' describes the familiar experience of seeing faces in clouds, in rocks, wood, bits of mechanisms, and on pieces of toast and even breakfast eggs. Such things are creatures of imagination, and as Philip Pullman reminds us:

*You won't understand anything about the imagination until you realize that it's not about making things up, it's about perception.*

For several years I've been exploring the rocky shores and the wood landscapes of the Midcoast, photographing creatures wherever they appear. And, as Yogi Berra might have put it, "you can see a lot by looking." They are all around us, grinning and frowning and daring us to acknowledge their presence.



Drift Inn Beach and Marshall Point are especially rich in rock creatures. And over the next few issues of the St. George Journal, I'll post a selection of my discoveries, with the hope that friends and neighbors will



Hugh Blackmer: Informing others against their will since 1943.

## Earth / Sea / Sky

### Of Winter Earth

Seed orders are placed and greenhouses begin to fill up with tender seedlings and sprouts. Buds are swelling alarmingly early, maple sap is running, and crocus and snowdrops are just beginning to show in south-facing locations. We all watch and wonder how and when spring will come in these changing times.

### An Undercover Critter Report . . .

Anita Siegenthaler

- **Wood Frogs and Peepers Underfoot**

Mother Nature drops leaves in fall for lots of reasons; one of them is to provide a winter haven for frogs and other creatures. Frogs cope with the cold by going dormant in crevices of rocks or rotting logs, or by burrowing into the leaf litter. Their little bodies generate a high concentration of glucose to protect vital organs. Ice crystals may form in other parts of the body. The heart may stop beating and the lungs may stop breathing. If you find a dormant frog it will seem to be lifeless. Like much of the winter world, it is just waiting for the spring thaw. Tread softly . .



- **Emerald Ash Borers Lurking:**

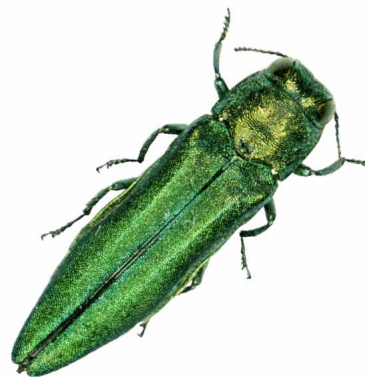
These critters are real survivors too. The larvae are protected from frigid winter temperatures by bark, and their very effective ability to synthesize anti-freeze agents within the body and remain cozy until spring. An Asian native, with no native predators in our region, the emerald ash borer decimates ash trees. Woodpeckers do their best but are unable to save an infected tree

**Note: WMcI.**

As the Black Ash trees of Maine are infected - yet another species threatened with extinction - one of the tragic consequences is the threat to the centuries old, tradition of [Wabanaki basket making](#). Not only is this a threat to a major source of income, but strikes a deep blow to the heart of tribal creations stories.

[Braiding Sweet Grass by Robin Wall Kimmerer](#)

This highly recommended and inspiring book, by a woman of the Potawatomi Nation, blends the wisdom of western science with the deep knowing and connection to plants and animals of native peoples. There is a wonderful chapter on basket weaving . . .



The bad and the beautiful . . .

- **Snow Fleas Cavorting:** On a cold but sunny day, the surface of snow can be populated by tiny moving spots that are actually "snow fleas" or one of the 600 known types of springtails. These miniature recyclers live in decomposing leaves, logs, and soil. A forked tail enables them to jump, hence the name. Their ability to produce a protein full of glycine, like an anti-freeze, protects them in winter. They are present year-round but generally too small and too dark to be seen in summer.



- **Deer Tick Plotting**

Temperatures below freezing can inhibit the movement of adult deer ticks but not kill them. Given a 32+ degree day, their activity can go up with the temperature. The only good news is that nymphs, the size of a poppy seed, are thought to be dormant in winter.

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## Of Winter Waters



**NOT the kind of ice you want to see if you are looking to go Ice Fishing!**



*DY*

What you are looking for is "hard water". You like to see a good 10" if you can get it. There are those among us, this man included, who know just where to go January through March to catch the big beauties - trout, bass, panfish, salmon, pike, etc.

Many practice catch & release and others know a thing or two about cookin' a fish. Even in a quirky winter like this, the ice has been thick and solid on nearby, well-stocked lakes and rivers, which come alive with avid sportsmen and women, out there in the cold with their specialized gear, figuring out where the fish are. This is a dedicated, extremely well versed and passionate crew of naturalists and winter lovers, many of whom learned the love and lore of ice fishing from their elders and are passing it on to the next generation.



They can cite chapter and verse from the [Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife](#) of this extremely well-regulated sport, and carry their licenses and the "law book" at all times. The advice is to know and pay attention to all the regulations, as well as the etiquette of the waters you are fishing if you want to get along and make the experience a good one for everyone. Any fisherman/woman will tell you, fishing is an art

form as well as a discipline, taking patience, knowledge of the fish, the waters in which they swim, and the right bait. The right gear helps too - like a nice K Drill for your auger.

You notice right away that these people get great big grins on their faces when they talk about ice fishing .

..



### **Aquaculture Business Development program accepting applications**

*Applications open through March 13th*

With Maine fisheries facing an uncertain future, marine-related economic diversification can help support coastal working communities. Shellfish and seaweed aquaculture can provide fishermen a way to continue making a living from the water for years to come. If you've ever considered gaining a new source of income by growing mussels, oysters, or seaweed, the Island Institute's Aquaculture Business Development program is here to help. Through business planning, prolonged one-on-one support services, and networking with existing aquaculturists and industry experts, this free program helps participants get started in the water. [Learn more & apply today!](#)

### **Of Winter Heavens**

Winter is a wondrous time to watch the cold dark skies with stars wheeling, sunrises and sunsets blazing, brilliant cold moons traversing, and clouds scudding and rolling, all as the days grow longer.

**Daylight Savings Time will kick in on at 2 am on Sunday, March 8th**, when we "spring forward." [A bit of history](#)

### **Sunsets - why are they so spectacular?**

The short answer is that drier and cleaner winter air gives us our gloriously intense sunset colors according to NOAA.



*WMcI*

### **Star Watching**

The cold air and long winter nights, gift us a vast window to stargaze.

According to [Constellation Guide](#), here's what to look for.

You might also want to try out one of those star and constellation identification, cell phone apps.

Or even better, maybe you just want to look up in wonder . . .

### **The Lunar Cycle**

In ancient times, and into the present, people across cultures, plan life around the lunar cycle, tracking the tides and seasons and planting by the moon. The whole of creation feels the pull of the moon.

In the lunar calendar, names are given to each month's Moon.

In the northern hemisphere, the February full moon is known as the **Snow Moon**. On average, February is the USA's snowiest month, according to data from the National Weather Service. Not so much this year.

[The Full Moon on March 9th is the Worm Moon](#), the last full moon of winter, also known as Lenten Moon, Crow Moon, Crust Moon, Chaste Moon, Sugar Moon, and Sap Moon.



Ten days later on March 19th, the much-awaited Spring or Vernal Equinox, when day and night are just about the same length, points us in the direction of spring. THIS is a cause for celebration!

### **Cloud Watching**

Another winter pastime as winter crawls by - [learn about the clouds](#) that billow and stream around us.



## **Fellow Beings - Critters & Creatures**

**Nature Bummin with Kirk Gentalen**

**March Revisited**

February

What do you call a place that always “hits the spot”, as the kids say? A place where every time you visit, you find yourself saying – “doesn’t get any better than this”. It’s a place you’ve been there a hundred times but each visit is better than the last, and the last visit was the best. It’s a pace of appreciation that seemingly can’t be sustained forever, and yet, it keeps working. The St. George Marsh with winter ice is such a place.

**“Doesn’t get any better than this”.**



The discussion in the last post focused on there being “less ice” this winter in the marsh and a lower water table in general. This is only my 5<sup>th</sup> winter in St. George, and my 3<sup>rd</sup> living on the marsh, so I won’t pretend to know long term historic water level data. At this point, I can confirm that there is “less ice” than the last 4 winters. The post also mentioned the “march of the ice fishing spiders”.

Since then things got colder and the spider sightings took a massive hit – all but eliminated at this point. The cold temps also froze a slippery smooth layer of ice to “top off” the ice already present, to the delight of skaters of all ages. Slushy to slippery in 24 hours. And like a good tide, a good freeze can catch critters off guard. On the freshly shellacked ice - just a day or two removed from our biggest January spider day ever (Personal & Family Record!) - Leif, Amy and I came across a frozen insect! Just below the surface was a water boatman (Family Corixidae) frozen mid-oar (is oar a verb?). A non-Snow Flea insect on the first of February? **Doesn’t get any better than this.**

**Beaver on ice, how nice – doesn’t get any better than this.**

On my way to the boatman, I stopped at a river otter latrine and scanned the ice for any evidence – trails, tracks or slides - of critter activity I might have missed. It was then I saw what Leif and I would call a “phat, little nugget” of a critter hunched by an opening in the ice. It was a mid-afternoon Beaver, and it



A quick research session turned up photos of the “water boatmen in ice” phenomena from Nebraska 2014! Just another St George/Nebraska connection! Chris Helzer was the observer who wrote about this, and in his post, he mentioned that the water boatmen are able to thaw and “pick up their lives where they left off” so to speak after being in the ice. I had kind of figured the boatman in the marsh was a goner – soon to be “crow food” even. This new information about their thawing potential would act as an inspiration, a motivation, and a destination for an afternoon outing after a morning full of sickness. Fresh air is good, right? I had to see if the water boatman was still there after a day’s worth of sun had warmed the ice surface.

As their name and leg adaptations suggest, **water boatman** is a mostly aquatic insect (AI). They can and will fly, however, and are often attracted to lights near ponds and lakes where they live. That’s in the spring, summer, and fall when aquatic insects are most active, or at least most easily observed. As it turns out, many of our favorite AI is still active under the ice in the winter. Did this water boatman find its way to the surface only to have the ice hole it used to climb out of freeze close? The opening a few feet away hinted that may be a correct guess. One thing I knew for sure was that I hadn’t seen one in the ice ever before. That, of course, does not mean it doesn’t happen often. I just hadn’t seen it before.

Water boatmen are a big hit at most pond study, and I have caught (and released!) them many times with kids in Maine and other locations east of the Rockies. Their hind pairs of legs are elongated and modified into two scoops that resemble paddles or oars. Water boatmen use these to swim, and watching an individual paddle around can be comical to watch, especially for 10-year-olds of all ages. The water boatman’s legs are also used to stir up algae, their main food source. They got legs and they know how to use them.



Although beavers are active year-round, this was still the first time I'd seen one above ice in a Maine February. Much of a beaver's winter activity is done under the ice, where they feast on cuttings they stashed before the ice formed or maybe find fresh plant matter below. This beaver had clearly traveled under the ice to the opening and was (clearly) taking advantage of the "exposed shrubbery meal" as it ate a path the width of its hips through the Leather leaf hummock. While I watched, the beaver worked through a pair of 2.5 ft tall leatherleaf shrubs before it slid into the open water. It then proceeded to swim three laps before stopping to grind away the ice edge with its teeth. Ice sealing up the opening was not going to happen, not as long as the beaver had a say in the matter.

I left the beaver to its Feast of Heaths, certain to return to look for sign another day. Warmth from the day's sun, however, had melted the top layer of ice enough to release captive insects and I found that the water boatman was gone. The nearest ice-hole was still closed and hadn't opened that day. If this boatman made it back under the ice it would have had to take to the air and find a new opening, possibly the one the beaver was keeping ice-free. Or maybe it flew in search of an ice hole only to freeze again somewhere else. Or maybe it became crow food after all. Or maybe....

Not until next visit that is! See you out there!

**.Just doesn't get any better than that**

A beaver chewing ice and a water boatman mystery.



All photographs from Kirk Gentalen



[St. George Municipal School Unit](#)  
<https://www.facebook.com/stgeorgemsu/>



*Madelyn MacCaffray*

## **The Trees**

by Madelyn MacCaffray, Grade 6

The trees are friendly old faces,  
They sit and watch the world.  
They are home to many,  
The birds, the chipmunks, and squirrels.  
The trees are always there.  
And every morning,  
They are first to touch the light.

Here's a little history of the programs that have been underway over the last couple of years.

**8th Grade: has been helping the town monitor the return of the alewives**, as well as improving the fish passage up the creek.

The number of returning alewives diminished until there were none in 2018.

**This triggered a study of how often the tide floods the marsh, which led to a salinity study last in 2019.**

Data was collected by a digital sensor built by a student.

Last fall, after particularly high tides in a week-long period, the peak salinity was 17 parts per thousand; seawater in the open ocean is 35 parts per thousand.

Last fall the students created a depth map of the marsh as well as continuing the salinity study; students are

**Spring plans:**

There is a plan to introduce several grades to the conserved land in St. George and to help them realize the importance of conserving land.

**6th grade:** will focus on what can we do in the outdoors and learning some history of special places (such as ice-cutting on the marsh).

**7th grade:** will study the ecosystem and why we need to conserve land. Stories will be captured in photography as well as words. Eventually, there will be an interactive map where the public can click on the location and hear or see our collective stories of these places.

**After school program:** a small group of students meets regularly to involve themselves in making a difference in their community, with a focus on climate change and environmentalism. Ideas under consideration range from plastics to solar.



6th Grader Scientists mucking about in the marsh . . .

**St. George MSU Liason: Sonja Schmanska**

**FOSG Liason: Sandra Roak**

## Factoids-Did ya know?

The Sansevieria plant is one of few plants that does most of its breathing at night - which means that having one in your bedroom keeps the air oxygenated and fresh all night long. Also, know as Snake Plant or Mother in Law Tongue, this low light plant is also particularly good removing toxins from the air, including formaldehyde, trichloroethylene, xylene, toluene, and benzene. What's not to love - only one thing it is poisonous if consumed by pets or people. Lowes often has lovely ones . . .



## Where in St. George?

**SGJ #2:**



**SGJ #1:**

UNSOLVED

Clue: Port Clyde



There is a prize for the first correct answer sent to [friendsofstgeorgeme@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofstgeorgeme@gmail.com).  
A Gift Certificate from [Ancho Honey](#).

**NOTE:** All items are clearly visible from a paved road . . .  
All you have to do is pay attention!



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