



# THE LANDAFF LEDGER



January 2012

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

Vol 3, Issue 1



## ***OOPS!***

*Just after our last ice storm, the Landaff Sand Spreader decided to take a side trip on its own down Cemetery Road, leaving the town snowplow, which was unfortunately still attached, to fend for itself. They've officially separated and it is unknown if they can reconcile their differences. Landaff Road Agent Wayne Marden was crushed – spiritually. Physically he's just fine. His shorts probably weren't, though.*

## NEW ADDITION!



The Landaff Town Hall kitchen has a new addition! The Friends of Landaff contracted Bob Sisson of Maine, a very good friend of Allan and Judy Boulet, to build a butcher block topped island to their specifications. The cabinet/ island will be used to store the kitchen's tableware and other utensils in a sanitary and mouse-proof manner. Many thanks to Bob for donating his labor to the Friends of Landaff and creating the most perfect cabinet for our kitchen.



## The Recipe Box

### *Miracle Fruit Cake*

by Rachael Booth

- |                                       |                |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| 1 cup raisins                         | 2/3 cup butter |
| 1 ¼ cup brown sugar, packed           | ¼ cup molasses |
| 1 ½ cup hot water                     | 2 eggs         |
| 3 cups flour                          | ½ tsp cinnamon |
| ½ tsp nutmeg                          | 1 tsp salt     |
| 1 tsp baking soda                     |                |
| 1 tsp baking powder                   |                |
| 1 small container mixed candied fruit |                |

Preheat oven to 275 degrees. Combine raisins, butter, brown sugar, molasses and water in pan. Boil gently for 3 minutes. Let cool then beat in eggs.

In a bowl, sift together flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, soda, baking powder and salt. Add flour mixture to cooled mixture. Stir in container of mixed fruit.

Pour into a greased 9" tube pan lined with greased wax paper. Bake 2 ½ hours. Cool and remove from pan.

Use as doorstep or throw away. It's a fruit cake, for crying out loud! You eat these things? Really?

## ***Weather or Not***

**By Don Brown**



As we head into the second half of winter, February offers extended daylight hours of one hour and 9 minutes from beginning to end. The high temperature record was 63 in 1997 and the record low was -26 in 1993. The average high on the first is 28 and low is 6 and increases to 35 and 12 degrees on the last day of the month. February is also the driest month of the year with an average of 2.25 inches of precipitation, which is about 23 inches of snow. This year we have one extra day in February and could get the whole 23 inches on the 29<sup>th</sup>. To date, we've had 39 inches of snowfall. Last year we had 79 inches as of February 1. If you remember, last year on Groundhog's Day we had our biggest snow of the season with 14 inches falling and a total of 34 inches in the first 8 days of February.

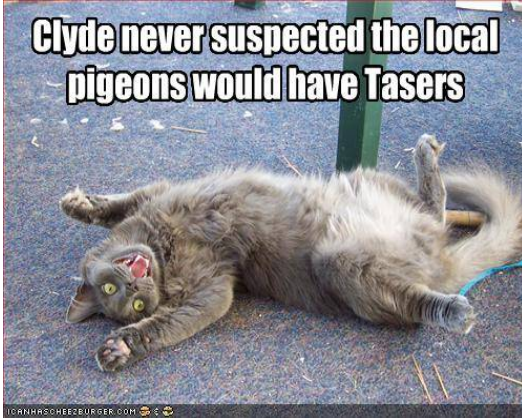
I'm sure many residents would agree it has been an unusual winter to date, with too much ice and not enough snow. An unusual region of atmospheric pressure over the Arctic known as the Arctic Oscillation (AO) has kept the Polar Jet Stream locked up at the far Northern latitudes, causing a warm, dry US winter, except in extreme northern New Hampshire and Maine, where temperatures have been steadily below freezing throughout.

This pressure pattern caused a few US records this year; the initial week of January was the driest in history and more than 95% of the US had below average snow cover, the greatest such percentage ever recorded. During December, approximately

half the US had temps at least 5 degrees above average, and more than 1500 daily record highs were set January 2<sup>nd</sup> thru the 8<sup>th</sup>. During that period, Landaff received a trace of snow each day that totaled less than an inch with a couple nights below zero. A strong jet stream that flows in a somewhat straight line from west to east, with few southward dips, prevents cold Arctic air from drifting south. The cause of this warm first half of winter in the US is the most extreme configuration of the jet stream *ever recorded*. The jet stream is an air current that flows west to east across the northern latitudes of the US, Europe and Asia altering precipitation and temperature, as portions of it dip southward or crest northward. The jet stream has been locked in that position by the AO for most of the winter and has sustained the largest pressure gradient since tracking began in 1865.

Conversely, December 2010 set snowfall records in many parts of the US. Sure enough, the AO had some of the lowest pressure ever observed, allowing the jet stream to move south and stay there. Arctic air descended, picked up moisture and interacted with warm fronts, and then dropped heavy snow. The December AO index has fluctuated wildly over the past six years with the two most extreme positive and two most negative values on record.

Meteorologists are not certain what causes the oscillations to vary so dramatically. Some say loss of Arctic sea ice due to global warming is causing the AO to drop in pressure (more cold and snow for the US). Others have noticed a correlation with sunspot activity which was very low in December of 2010 and very high in December of 2011. Winter has many weeks to go so the AO can still shift. I am a believer that Mother Nature makes up for herself so keep the rock salt, sand and shovels close at hand. P.S. Don't believe the Groundhog!!



## Counting Winter Birds: Join NH Audubon's Upcoming Survey

by Paul Nickerson, NH Audubon Board  
Chair

Like many among you, I am drawn to New Hampshire Audubon by birds, and winter birds have a special niche in my soul because they frequently brighten days that are otherwise cold and windy; hardly fit for man or beast. Yet the birds find a way. Over the years, I have tried to make my yard more attractive to our feathered friends, with some success. Pokeberries, otherwise known as robin magnets thrive here; holly bushes and their berries seem to have a special appeal for bluebirds, and a crabapple tree that hangs onto its fruits provides forage for several species. I have also made several brush piles around the edges of my lawn and they provide great shelter. Juncos really love them, and they often retreat into them if spooked. And, of course traditional sunflower and suet feeders add to the drawing power. Fat trimmed from various meats goes into the suet feeder rather than the waste stream.

What I like best about winter birds is the unpredictability of which species might appear, and what they will do to surprise me. Last year, for the first time, I had bluebirds visit my sunflower feeder, and they returned for more than a month. A few years ago it was redpolls, in big numbers that turned up. When we moved here 30 plus years ago, Evening Grosbeaks were regular winter visitors, but not during recent decades. For the past few years a Carolina Wren or two has shown up, and the other day I watched one of them work over my firewood pile, in search of insects. My favorite of all has to be the ever cheerful chickadee. Polite, happy and dressed as if going to a formal affair, they really help make winter easier to bear.

I would like to encourage your participation in New Hampshire Audubon's winter bird survey. In addition to gathering valuable information, it is also a lot of fun. "Let's see, is that six or seven juncos?," or , "Quick, count the robins in the garden before they fly." My wife and I do this every year and really look forward to it and to the summaries that follow. To quote the words to an old song, "Nobody does it better," (than NH Audubon). For details on how to participate, call NH Audubon at 603-224-9909 or [see the website](#).

## Plant News

### *2012 Grafton Conservation District Annual Plant Sale*

Plant order forms and plant descriptions may be obtained from Carol Wharton ([cwharton@plymouth.edu](mailto:cwharton@plymouth.edu)) or 838-6605. Deadline for placing orders is March 14.

Plant pick up is Saturday April 28th 9:00am thru 11:00am at Windy Ridge Orchard, North Haverhill.

Planting and Pruning workshop is Friday April 27 5:30 - 7:00 pm Windy Ridge with owner Dick Fabrizio and UNH Forrester Dave Falkenham. Call Pam at (603) 353-4652 ext 103 to register.

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### *Growing Blueberries Workshop*

Wed Feb 29 that 1:00 pm at the UNH Coop Extension Conference Room Grafton County Complex. Two types of blueberries will be for sale at the Plant Sale - Patriot and Bluecrop.

Call or email Pam at 353-4652 ext 103 or [Pamela.Gilbert@nh.nacdnet.net](mailto:Pamela.Gilbert@nh.nacdnet.net) for info etc.

- submitted by Carol Wharton

## Weasel Words

by Judy Boulet

We were on our way to Monroe and were flagged down by a lady in distress so we turned around and went back to help her. In her hand, she had a “have-a-heart” trap with the most beautiful creature I have ever seen inside it - a white ermine! Other names for this creature are short-tailed weasel, stout, and royskatt.



This ermine was caught in the lady’s garage, as she was trying to catch and get rid of chipmunks. The ermine is a small animal that weighs between 3-15 ounces. The head and body length can range from 7-13 inches with a tail up to 5 inches long. Males are much longer than females. Since this was late November, the ermine’s coat was a brilliant white to give it its winter camouflage. A tiny bit of black tipped the tail. The coat of an ermine changes with the seasons and camouflages itself from predators. In the spring and summer, the coat is a chocolate brown with a white underbelly and a black tip on the tail. The ermine is a carnivore and eats rabbits, small insects, and rodents. Because of their sharp teeth, they are able to catch and eat animals much larger than themselves. During the Middle Ages, the fur of the

ermine in the white phase was popular for embellishing the clothing of royalty as well as for the rich. Now ermines are almost never used for clothing. Ermines are neither threatened, nor endangered. The ermine we had a chance to possess for a few hours was not a happy animal. It hissed and smelled slightly of a musky odor.

We released it far away from the lady near the Cumerford Dam. Had I known what I now know about ermines, I would have advised the lady to KEEP the ermine in her garage and the chipmunks would disappear. She wouldn’t need the “have-a-heart trap”, either.

### QUESTIONS THAT HAUNT ME!



**How important does a person have to be before they are considered assassinated instead of just murdered?**

**Why does a round pizza come in a square box?**

**If every insurance company says they can get your insurance cheaper than anyone else, can you eventually get it for free?**

**How is it that we put man on the moon before we figured out it would be a good idea to put wheels on luggage?**

**Why is it that people say they 'slept like a baby' when babies wake up like every two hours?**

**Why are you IN a movie, but you're ON TV?**

**Why do doctors leave the room while you change? They're going to see you naked anyway...**

## *Upcoming Concert News*

The Friends of Landaff will be sponsoring the ***Parker Hill Road Band*** on March 31, 2012. The concert will start at 7:00. Raffles will be offered, as well as refreshments. All proceeds for this concert will go to the rejuvenation projects of the Landaff Town Hall Kitchen. Stop by to see the new curtains, the farmers' tables made with wood from Norman Gilbert's auction, the new grill hood purchased with a large donation from Mt. Hope Grange, and the new silverware cabinet that was designed to keep the critters off the utensils. Support the Friends of Landaff and attend the Parker Hill Road Band concert. Your support is appreciated!

## *Chicken Run*



*by Kathy Coyle*

Here we are, deep into what the calendar calls winter, and Team Coyle has begun offering us their hen fruit. Even the shy ladies have taken to the lay very well. I don't know if it is differences in the breeds or whatever, but there are some interesting differences in their laying habits. I'm finding 3 and sometimes 4 eggs in one nest box. Now, I check for eggs everyday so I'm not getting yesterday's crop. The sizes of the eggs vary as the longer a hen has been laying, the bigger the eggs are. Further, one of the hens seems to like laying her eggs on the floor of the Palace. The first laying flock we had included 6 Barred Rock hens and they laid brown speckled eggs, but this batch has only 3 or 4 laying those.

All the chickens are healthy eaters and absolutely adore bread – any kind of bread. While their nutritionally balanced feed remains the staple of their diet, I can't help but indulge

them – and myself – by ripping up a couple of slices of bread each day to offer them. I enjoy all the attention I get when I come into the Palace because they absolutely know that I have bread for them. Surprisingly enough, the roosters remain gentlemen and allow the hens first dibs on the bread.

Now there's a subject of interest – the roosters. There are 3 or 4 of them but I can't tell for sure as I've only seen 3 crow. Once they moved to the winter quarters I couldn't watch them as readily as I'd like. Sitting inside the Palace is out of the question since those roosting in the rafters indiscriminately vent their waste material from wherever they are, and I have enough of that kind of experience under my belt to last a lifetime. The roosters seem to have developed their own pecking order: I'm not seeing any evidence of fighting. Comb seems to have relinquished leadership to the Golden Buff, Midas, who has taken to jumping whichever hen he chooses. It's interesting to listen to the different crows as each rooster has his own style - just like people.

I confess, I caved in to convenience and bought a heated water base. Last winter I was able to get out there and bring them water 2 or 3 times per day, but now I cannot and these are thirsty birds. If they don't get enough water they get stressed and that means lower egg production and unhappy chickens. They go through 5 gallons of water in 2 or 3 days! There seem to be a number of non-electric solutions but I'm not comfortable with any them.

Our Christmas tree has had a second life, too. I had no plans of putting one up this year but when my employer priced all trees at \$5.00 AND I got an employee discount I could not resist, especially after a coworker told me that his chickens liked to perch on his old Christmas trees! Then our neighbor Bobbi Jo, also a coworker, helped me pick it out. I put the tree up and it was a beauty – not very big but pretty. It now lives, still smelling terrific, in the chicken run but the chickens won't touch a chicken toe to snow so I guess all of them will see it on the first warm, snow-free day. The way the weather's been that day may not be too far off!