

Cape Breton Weather

This year's weather word: Cloudy



by Bill Danielson

As I climbed out of bed this morning, sleepy-eyed, I noticed a little fuzzy patch of something on the blanket. I swiped at it to brush it away, and discovered it was not dust or fuzz, but a dim splash of sunlight!

My first reaction was to apologize for trying to give it the brush-off. I wanted to say, "Please don't go away! It's been so long, I just didn't recognize you."

Truly, the sun has been an uncommon visitor of late, and of not so late. And I have some foggy facts to prove it. Each day around 6 p.m., I write down the weather conditions at my home in Smelt Brook. Looking back over my records since mid-January, I find that the sky was completely overcast at observation time on three quarters of the days, while it was completely clear only ten times – about once every two and a half weeks. The average cloud cover at observation time was an impressive 85%. Assuming that this 6 p.m. percentage applies throughout the day, it seems that it was sunny only 15% of the time from January to mid-July. No wonder the tanning salons in Smelt Brook are so popular.

How does this meager amount of sunlight compare to normal? In an average Cape Breton year, 33% of daylight hours in January are sunny. The percentage increases steadily from month to month, reaching 50% in July, making Cape Breton's "normal" year a veritable sunshine Mecca compared to this year's totals.

And just who is to blame for this stretch of relentless cloudiness? The immediate culprit has been a tongue of cold, low pressure in the upper atmosphere, extending southeastward from

Quebec across the Maritimes. Such features act like magnets, attracting systems of clouds and precipitation ("lows"). The result: for the past few months, hordes of lows have been drawn to the Maritimes, like summer tourists; and like summer tourists, they slow down when they get here, and wander around for a few days before exiting. In the meantime, the next low is cruising in from the west, to repeat its predecessor's experience.

The cold air aloft acts like a magnet in the vertical direction as well. It draws warmer, low-level air upwards. The air cools as it rises, forming clouds and precipitation.

The curious thing about all this cloudiness is that it hasn't produced record rainfall amounts. It has rained on a huge number of spring days, but the totals generally have been modest. However, the persistent cloud cover, the lack of sun, and light winds have retarded evaporation, so the ground has remained soggy. In many gardens the best crop so far has been slugs.

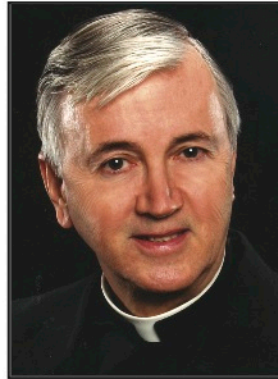
Although 2011 definitely has been damp so far, historically the second half of the year is the time of big rainfalls. Thunderstorm activity, hurricane season, and autumn storminess all contribute to higher totals, as last year's Meat Cove flood and the December storms bear witness. To track these heavy rain events, the North Highlands Community Museum has established a rainfall network. Each day, observers across Cape Breton measure the day's rainfall and email their reports to Downspill@gmail.com. The data are plotted on maps which are posted on the Museum's website. The network welcomes new observers. For more information or to sign up, just drop an email to the address above. Or stop in at the museum, check out its new weather exhibit, and get yourself a rain gauge.

The Semi-Annual Meeting of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society

Saturday, August 6, 2011 at 10:00 am
at the Masonic Hall, Queen Street, Baddeck

Guest Speaker - Susanna Fuller Ph.D. Marine Biology

All members and citizens concerned with the future of the Bras d'Or Lakes are invited to attend



Holy Mass & Healing Service with Fr. Albert MacPherson, O.S.A.

Augustinian Healing Ministry
Lawrence, Massachusetts

Thursday, July 28th • 5:00 pm
Stella Maris Parish Church
Inverness, Nova Scotia

All are welcome to attend!



NOVA SCOTIA NATURE TRUST

We invite you to join the Nature Trust in celebrating the conservation successes taking place throughout Cape Breton!

August 6, 2011 ~ 6:30 pm

Alexander Graham Bell
National Historic Site of Canada
Chebucto Street (Highway 205)
Baddeck, Nova Scotia

R.S.V.P. to David: david@nsnt.ca or (902) 425-5263

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INVERARY RESORT

What's going on...

ALEXANDER'S RESTAURANT AT BELL BAY INTRODUCES OUR SUNDAY BRUNCH BUFFET 11:00am-2:00pm

MENU
Assortment of Summertime Salads
Featured Egg Dish, Bacon, Sausage and Homefries
Choice of Two Hot Entrees
Potato, Vegetable Medley
Dessert, Tea & Coffee

ON THE WATER AT INVERARY LAKESIDE RESTAURANT AND BOARDWALK

Summer is finally here and the BBQ is all fired up from 11:00am-2:00pm daily. Each day offers a selection of seasonal favourites.

Mussels & beer on the boardwalk 3-5:00pm daily.

Evening Dining from 5:00-9:00pm

THIS WEEK IN THISTLEDOWN PUB
Tracey Cavanaugh
Open mic with Larry on Wednesdays
July 31 Jason MacDonald
All are welcome!

\$15.95 Per person Plus taxes

Drop in or for a reservation call 295.1333 ext. 231

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