

Couple takes helm of Salvation Army Birding

Duo spends two years at officer training in New York to run Houlton Corps

BY GLORIA AUSTIN
HOULTON PIONEER TIMES

HOULTON — The Salvation Army in Houlton is back to full strength with the addition of Lts. Dominic and Elizabeth Nicoll.

After spending the last two years at the Salvation Army College for Officer Training in Suffern, New York, the two were commissioned as lieutenants and ordained as Christian ministers.

“This is our first appointment. It is all new, but it is exciting,” said Dominic Nicoll, who has a distinct British accent.

“My parents were [Salvation Army] Corps officers in England,” he said. “So, I have been raised in the Salvation Army.”

But, Nicoll did not follow directly in his parents’ footsteps. He worked as a manager at Lowe’s, while Elizabeth Nicoll held part-time jobs after the birth of their daughter, Gillian Nicoll.

The two were always active lay workers in the Corps until they were “just simply called by God” to step into a leadership position, said Elizabeth Nicoll.

While at the Salvation Army School for Officer Training, the Nicolls were well prepared for their initial assignment.

“They gave us lots of experience, as well as classes,” said Dominic Nicoll.

“We had hands-on experience,” added Elizabeth Nicoll.

The couple were given assignments during the summer and at Christmas to go out to different Corps locations to see how operations run, while they were in training school.

Dominic Nicoll said the Salvation Army School for Officer Training is accredited by the state of New York as a college. The couple each earned an associate’s degree.

According to the Salvation Army’s website, the international organization is “an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.” Commissioned officers not only spread the word of the gospel, they “serve as administrators, teachers, social workers, counselors, youth leaders and musicians.”

The Nicolls first day on the job at the Houlton Salvation Army was July 1.

Cindi Hanning handles social service clients for the

Houlton Salvation Army, while the lieutenants will be overseeing the operations to make sure they run smoothly.

“We just want to find ways that people here need to be served,” said Elizabeth Nicoll. “We are looking for a need that is not being met by other agencies and how we can meet that need. We do not want to do something that someone else is doing and doing well.”

She said they needed to take time to meet with people from the area to determine what needs were not being met in the community.

“We have a few ideas of what we would like to do,” she said.

“Obviously, this [depends] on funding,” Dominic Nicoll added. “We are in talks about what really needs to be done now and what can wait until later.”

The Salvation Army receives a United Way grant for its rental and utilities fund every three months.

“After a month and a half, we are out of money,” said Elizabeth Nicoll. “So, one of the things we are definitely trying to figure out in the next couple of months is where we can get more

money to be able to meet needs continuously.”

“It is a lot of work at the minute,” Dominic Nicoll said with a smile. “As Liz said, we don’t want to do anything that is being done a block away and being done well. If need be, maybe we can partner with another organization. Otherwise, we want to do what the community needs now and further it.”

The Nicolls will be leading church services each Sunday at 12 Court St. in Houlton. Sunday school starts at 9:45 a.m., followed by a “holiness meeting” at 11 a.m.

Though the couple is starting to get more settled into Houlton, they already appreciate the tranquility.

“After being near New York City for two years, this is wonderful,” said Elizabeth Nicoll. “We have been welcomed by everyone we have met. Everyone has been really nice. It is a quiet town and we love that.”

“It is very nice around here,” said Dominic Nicoll. “This is where we are called to serve and this is where we want to be. We see things that need to be done, that is why we are here.”

The Sabine’s gull is the rarest of the three. It nests in the high arctic, winters in the tropics and avoids Maine, except in this spot, where one seems to pop up annually.

As winter arrives, other gulls descend from the north. Iceland gulls can be found in sparse numbers all along the Maine coast during the dark months. On my last winter visit to East Quoddy Lighthouse at the northern tip of Campobello, I was startled to see every gull swirling around was an Iceland gull.

Nor is the abundance of birdlife in Head Harbor Passage limited to gulls. With good binoculars, it’s often possible to find razor-bills and common murrelets in mid-channel. These relatives of the puffin normally go out to sea after nesting, but some can’t resist the local bounty.

There was a time when red-necked phalaropes crowded into the channel. These tiny birds are classified as shorebirds, though they don’t act like other shorebirds. Rather than feed on mudflats, they swim with lobed toes and pick food off the surface. In the 1980s, tens of thousands could be found in the waters near Eastport. For unknown reasons, that population crashed, and birders would be pleased to find a few dozen nowadays.

Need more inducement to visit? The Eastport Pirate Festival is next weekend.

The common black-headed gull is also a Eurasian bird. If you walk around London, you’ll see them everywhere. There is a small colony established in Newfoundland. This gull is slightly larger than a Bonaparte’s gull, and it is also dark under the wings.

Bob Duchesne serves as vice president of Maine Audubon’s Penobscot Valley Chapter. He developed the Maine Birding Trail, with information at mainebirding-trail.com. He can be reached at duchesne@midmaine.com.



In the Aug. 15 Bangor Daily News, there were no correct answers for this “What is it?” The object pictured was a pair of garage door top- and bottom-mounted wheels, which were mounted on a track. These were used on old wooden sliding garage doors. Erny Levesque of Saint David was closest with his answer of exterior barn door sliding wheel.



ROBERT CROUL

WHAT IS IT?

Send your answers for this week’s What Is It (left) to: Robert Croul, 1095 North Road, Newburgh, Maine 04444. Readers may respond by email to recestate@midmaine.com. Be sure to write “What is it?” in the subject line.



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