

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE BALLENISLES WILDLIFE FOUNDATION



# NATURE MATTERS

Fall 2017



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Dear Friends,

Before we at BallenIsles start another exciting “season,” I want to acknowledge those who donated their time, devotion, and expertise to BIWF (and by inference to BallenIsles) during the summer of 2017. I will not name names; they know who they are: BIWF board and committee member volunteers who assumed responsibilities of “snowbird” volunteers; residents who were not BIWF board or committee members but nevertheless went out of their way to help; many extraordinary BallenIsles security personnel and employees; contributors, both regular and occasional, to this magazine; and outside animal groups and individuals who never said no. Clearly, “nature matters” to all of these generous souls, and words cannot begin to express my gratitude to each and every one.

*“If those who owe us nothing gave us nothing, how poor we would be.” —Antonio Porchia*

Naturally yours,  
Marianne Guerra

[DONATE NOW](#)

## Mission Statement and Foundation Goals of BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation

BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation (BIWF), a nonprofit 501©(3) charitable organization, is a group of volunteers who love and respect animals. Our inspiration comes from Mona Roberts, a resident of Bermuda Bay, who during her 18 years in BallenIsles devoted herself to the rescue and rehabilitation of animals in need.

### BIWF MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation is to preserve, foster, and respect all animal life in the BallenIsles community.

### BIWF FOUNDATION GOALS

- Aid and assist injured animals, stray animals, and lost pets found in BallenIsles.
- Maintain a feral cat TNVR (trap, neuter, vaccinate, return) program for the BallenIsles community to avoid overpopulation.
- Educate and inform BallenIsles’ residents about wildlife/animal/flora matters.
- Maintain and establish working relationships with, assist, and endorse wildlife and animal organizations that help BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation achieve our mission and foundation goals.



To learn more about the BallenIsles Wildlife Foundation, visit our website at [BallenIslesWildlifeFoundation.org](http://BallenIslesWildlifeFoundation.org) and our Facebook page at [facebook.com/BallenIslesWildlifeFoundation](https://facebook.com/BallenIslesWildlifeFoundation).

For additional information about BIWF or to volunteer, email us at [info@ballenisleswildlifefoundation.org](mailto:info@ballenisleswildlifefoundation.org).



# Let There Be Light—And Birds!

by Elaine Schaller\*

After 8 years in Bermuda Bay, I told my husband I'd come to an epiphany. "Don't tell me we're moving again," he said, frowning his brow. Earle is an easy-going guy, accustomed to my fanciful urges to reposition furniture and even to relocate to different houses. This was, in fact, our fourth home in BallenIsles in 24 years.

"Relax," I said. "I love it here, but we're living in the dark." I watched him breathe a sigh of relief. "I only want to take down the plantation shutters in the dining room." "Why?" he asked. "It'll brighten up the space," I replied. "Even with the slats tilted horizontally, the shutters block the view." Earl shook his head, opened the door, and followed me outside to our backyard. "You're right," he reluctantly agreed. We admired the small patio, the deep swath of lawn rolling toward a meandering creek, and most of all the large, graceful tree that leaned out over the water. "I never appreciated what we had out here."

It was a Saturday morning with ample time to start the project before his tee time and my duplicate bridge game. Dismantling the four sliding plantation shutter units was no easy matter, but we were determined. Three hours later, we stood in our entryway, astonished by the light that brightened the space. Little did we know what more was in store for us.

Eight ibis stood along the large, barren branch of the tree, all facing westward like little white soldiers waiting at attention for their leader to announce flight time. They came every day for about a month. We presumed that they were the same birds each time. Then, only one or two showed up, but recently the whole flock appeared again. Had they been congregating behind our house all these years?



It didn't take long for us to realize that one of the attractions of the tree was its location at the edge of the water. Many birds feed at the canal's bank and others perch higher. The tree makes a perfect spot for them to rest after a good meal in the canal. That very day anhingas and limpkins visited periodically, stayed on the branch for about an hour, and left. We even see the occasional heron.



In August, a single roseate spoonbill found a perch on our tree. Why was he alone? He often sat there for hours on end, turning one way and then another. After googling their domestic habits, I learned that, like the flamingo, roseate spoonbills are pink because of their diet of crustaceans, especially shrimp, mollusks, snails, and insects. The older they

get, the deeper their color. I also read that roseate spoonbills don't mate until they are at least 3 years old and that they are seasonally monogamous. I was relieved; our lonesome fellow was either not yet mature or looking for a new mate. Then again, "he" could be a "she." We had no idea.

Our spoonbill visits our tree often since we first noticed him. He/she stays for a while, flies away, and returns a few hours later. Often, he has to share his spot with several ibis. Interesting that the mix of birds are able to hang out together without any ruckus, although the roseate sometimes stays to



one end of the branch, not socializing but also not withdrawing. Could it be that he or she is checking out a potential nesting spot in our tree? In Florida, roseate spoonbills nest in November and December. Fingers crossed.

This has been our first season without the plantation shutters in the dining room. Removing them lit up our lives in a myriad of ways. As we move around the house, both my husband and I find ourselves peering out the window. A pair of binoculars and a Pocket Naturalist's Guide of Florida Birds now sit on our coffee table.

\*All photographs by Earle Schaller.

# The Poetry and Majesty of the Solar Eclipse

By Tim Whelan\*

Here's my account of today's eclipse 8/21/17 enjoyed with three other friends at 9212', at the epicenter: Union Pass near Dubois, WY.

Cloudless. Mostly steep meadow covered thousands of uneven, rocky acres. Full bloom Columbine, Queen Anne's lace, other purples and reds. Plenty of snow on nearby peaks. (43 degrees in tents overnight.)

10:18 a.m. local time: As the moon munched and munched the sun, strange, silvery light bathed the ground, reminding of flat winter light, others thought "the contrast slider was pushed way too far." Shadows cast by the wildflowers were too long too quickly.

We stretched a blanket under a pine, the boughs casting shadows. Toward totality, the pine needles acted like a thousand pin hole cameras projecting ever shrinking, better defined crescents, hundreds down onto the blanket. And after totality, the crescents inverted!

The moon attacked the sun from the west, at about two o'clock position. As the moon Pacmanned the sun, the leading edge was a thin, white hot line. Methodical, inexorable, smooth edges. Viola! Gone in 1:07.

Totality at 11:36 a.m. Gloom gathered but now it was flipped-switch dark. The stiff wind stopped and the temperature dropped 14 degrees. Birds panicked and retreated to their nests only to fly back a few minutes after totality.



When the moon finished having its way, no light pierced our glasses. I didn't understand for a split second. "Take your glasses off, boys," I yelled. And there hung the bottomless, perfect black sphere with radiant white light jutting up, down, side to side. It was beautiful and so out of place in our sky. Such change in an instant! God's eye.

The corona was a scratchy white circle surrounding the ultimate deep darkness. Suddenly, from the five o'clock position, a massive "diamond" blasted from the corona ring. Two stars/planets show up.

Too quickly, white light of totality vanished, and the sun's radiance regained dominion. 360 degree sunrise awed, reassured.

Phenomenal!

\*Owner of Art by Nature Garden Center, 5155 Northlake Boulevard, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418, and Purple Martin expert.

# The Green Anole\*

by John S. Simon, M.D.\*\*

Surprise! The Geico gecko, Chris, is not a gecko—he’s a green anole, not even in the same genus and species as a gecko. The green anole is an American arboreal lizard of the iguana family. The little brown/gray lizards that run all over your driveway and yard, many with curly tails, are the real geckos. Although the green anole is often mistaken for an American chameleon because of its ability to change color, mostly to brown or black, it is in no way related to the chameleon. The bright green guy stuck on your window with suction cup feet and a long straight tail is an anole.

So who’s who in the anole world? Of the 250 species of anoles worldwide, 30 plus are in Florida, and only one is indigenous: the magnificent green anole (*A. Carolensis*). The rest were imported (from Cuba, South America, and especially the Caribbean) primarily as pets or in exhibits. Two are worth noting: 1) The brown anole (*A. Sagrei*), sometimes mistaken for a green anole that has changed to brown, is larger, much more aggressive, cannot change color, and tends to dominate and replace the green. Since the early 1990s brown anoles have bullied green anoles off the ground, forcing them to live in shrubs and trees; green anoles quickly evolved to have bigger, stickier feet and a longer fourth finger with bigger toe pads to better grip their lofty perches.



The Cuban green anole (*A. Porcatis*), morphologically similar to the native green, has succeeded in colonizing less habitable areas of Florida, has interbred with the native green anole, and because they are almost indistinguishable, both are commonly referred to as the “Cuban green anole.”

Typically, the green anole is 4 to 6 inches long with a long straight tail. Females tend to be smaller, and males are either heavyweights or lightweights, differing not only in length and weight but also in aggressiveness, bite strength, and dominance, especially at mating time. Anoles do not change color in order to camouflage but in response to threats or physiological changes.

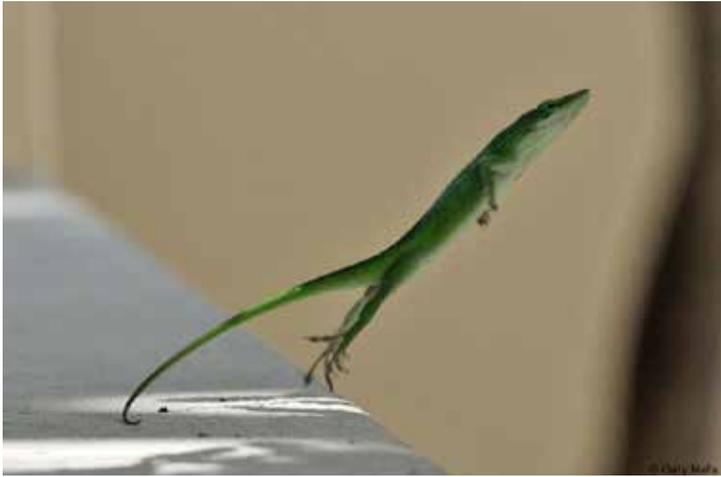


The green anole has a slender body with a narrow somewhat triangular head, a prominent sharp nose, and a white belly and lips. The eyes, lateral, large, and usually highlighted with a turquoise border, can move independently allowing two simultaneous visual fields. All four feet have footpads that function as suction cups allowing the anole to stick on such vertical surfaces as windows or walls. The dewlap, an expandable sac on the underside of the male’s neck/jaw is pink to red, he puffs it out (see cover photo) as part of the mating ritual, in territorial disputes, or other confrontational situations. When the anole is grasped by a predator, the straight tail will break off to allow escape; the tail will regenerate, albeit not to the same length or shape.

The anole’s habitat is mainly arboreal. It prefers shaded tree branches positioned to allow access to prey and protection

\*Rhymes with cannoli, although there is much dispute about pronunciation.

\*\* All photographs by Mary Kirby.



from predators. In Florida, the palm frond is a favorite hangout. The male green anole is singularly territorial and rarely ventures very far: the larger the anole, the larger the territory. Should another male intrude, he'll display such signs of displeasure as dewlap puffing, head bobbing, and push up movements; actual physical confrontation is rare. He welcomes female anoles as they spell mating, and he enjoys extensive polygamy. A dominant male may have a harem of females. The anole is an insectivore but will eat seeds or grains if need be. It will only capture insects if they are moving. It is not very particular in its diet—if it's a bug and in motion, he'll eat it. Birds and snakes are the primary anole predators, but in urban areas dogs, cats, cars, and bikes are the culprits. To avoid predators, the green anole has developed a kind of a "wing" that enables it to glide down from high branches much

like a flying squirrel. The lifespan of the green anole is up to 7 years depending on food supply and avoidance of predators. The smaller anoles cannot compete with the larger ones and thus have shorter life spans.

The anole mating ritual is elaborate, taking place in the warmer months, usually from April to August. The male tries to seduce the female by bobbing its head up and down and puffing out its dewlap. The female ovulates for about 2 weeks during which she produces one or two small, round, white, hard shelled eggs. She can retain the eggs until she finds a suitable place for them, usually in soft dirt or plant debris. One mating suffices for fertilization as the female can store sperm for 8 months and occasionally longer. Once she deposits the egg, she is done; she doesn't guard or nurture the egg or the young. Gestation takes about 6 weeks. The hatchling is about 0.25 inches, looks like a tiny adult, complete with gender differentiation, and reaches sexual maturity at 8 to 9 months old. One female produces about 10 offspring yearly. Rarely, the female will retain the fertilized egg in her oviduct long enough for it to hatch, which gives the illusion of a live birth. The hatchling is on its own to feed on baby crickets and small flying bugs and to hide from predators.

The green anole is truly the royalty of lizards. What a treat to see one on your window hanging on with its wonderful adhesive footpads, its beautiful bright green body, and its puffed out dewlap.

## PLEASE VOLUNTEER To Help BIWF Fulfill Its Mission and Foundation Goals

### RESCUE

1. Learn how to implement and help to perform any or all functions of our Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, and Return (TNVR) program for feral cats found in BallenIsles.
2. Foster and/or help to socialize abandoned kittens rescued in BallenIsles.
3. Assist in finding forever homes for our rescued, fostered, and socialized kittens.
4. Feed a Community Cat or Cats (cats that have been TNVRed) year round, during "season," or during "off season," or substitute for primary "feeder" when he/she is unavailable.

5. Provide veterinary care.

6. Transport injured wildlife to Busch Wildlife Sanctuary for treatment.

### NATURE MATTERS MAGAZINE

1. Solicit articles.
2. Write articles.
3. Proofread articles.
4. Submit photos.

### COMPUTER SKILLS

1. Input.
2. Create flyers.

# Featured PET



## Stella's Journey: A Lesson in Love and Determination

by Eileen Eisner

What can my husband Avrerell and I say about our Stella? How can one discuss a family's relationship with a wonderful pet who is nearing the end of her life?

In 2003, Stella, an 8-week-old black standard poodle, came into our lives.\* She was beautiful, healthy, loving, intelligent, and even tempered. Our family of six embraced Stella with open hearts. Each of us felt that he/she was "Stella's favorite," but soon we realized that Stella was an equal opportunity lover. Stella, being smart and social, understood almost



everything. She loved people, dogs, and cats as well as running on the beach, playing with her toys, and watching the animal channel on TV. She was the perfect dog.

In the summer of 2009 Stella became ill with violent stomach issues and she refused food and water. She was dehydrated, lethargic, and unresponsive. After hospitalizing her and ordering

many diagnostic tests, our skilled New Jersey veterinarian, Dr. Gary Vander Brok, concluded that Stella had Addison's Disease. Her adrenal system was shutting down, and she required mega doses of prednisone daily to save her life. When the crisis thankfully subsided, her daily dose of prednisone was reduced and combined with fludrocortisone. The only side effect of long-term steroids was her paper cravings. She ate books, cardboard, papers, paper towels, photos, and invitations; her special delight was toilet paper. Intelligent Stella learned to sneak around the house at night and go on a "paper chase." We had to close all doors and secure garbage cans, but she always found any paper that we hadn't hidden.

Other than an acute bout of pancreatitis in 2010, Stella was active and relatively healthy—until the summer of 2016 when her stamina and gait started to decline. She had difficulty going up and down stairs, so we used a rear harness to lift her back legs to help her. Once again, Dr. Vander Brok came to her rescue; he diagnosed her with age-related, severe arthritis, stenosis, and spinal deterioration. He pointed out that Stella had had a miraculous life for the past 8 years and that her condition was typical for a 13-year-old larger dog. While making suggestions on how to maintain her quality of life, he also advised us that as long as she seemed happy, was not in pain or incontinent, and had an appetite, we should let nature take its course. He predicted that she would have another year with us.

At her current age of 14 ½ Stella's condition has worsened. She can no longer walk without assistance. In addition to our supporting her with the harness, trails of carpet runners

\*Our veterinarian neighbor in NJ contacted us when his client was going to return a standard poodle puppy to the breeder. He said that the puppy was adorable and asked if we were interested. Our daughter had been asking for a horse; we gave her a choice: a horse or the puppy. Luckily for all of us, she picked the puppy.



throughout our home in Florida provide her with the traction she needs. To improve Stella's quality of life, we have tried laser therapy and water therapy (using a treadmill) at the Healing Arts Veterinary Center in West Palm Beach. Both techniques caused her additional stress and exhaustion. Because we heard that dogs with crippling conditions benefit from acupuncture, Stella is now under the care of Dr. Yu, a veterinary acupuncturist, who has explained that due to Stella's advanced state of deterioration acupuncture along with electrical stimulation will not cure her but will provide some comfort and possibly prevent further neurological damage. As a result, Stella's stamina and energy has increased. Sadly, she still has little or no mobility in her back legs.



Desperate to help Stella we did extensive networking resulting in trials and errors with splints, on-line wheels, and a life preserver in the pool.



In early July, after myriad recommendations, we miraculously found Dr. Joyce Loeser's Animal Recreation and Rehabilitation Center in Davie, FL. Wow. What a place and what an experience! It is a sprawling building located on a functioning plant nursery. It has a funky feel to it with a

stand of beautiful plants where clients are invited to choose what they want and leave a donation. Inside the rehabilitation center is a large living room with reception area and several couches. At check-in we were told that Dr. Loeser sees all patients in the living room. We noticed a woman in shorts and a T-shirt sitting on the floor next to a dog. She appeared to be examining the pet while talking to his/her owner. Could this be Dr. Loeser? Suddenly, she stood up and ala Marlon Brando in *Streetcar Named Desire* yelled out, "Stella." That was our unique introduction to Dr. Loeser.

Dr. Loeser spoke to us as she sat on the floor examining



Stella. She said that she might have an extra set of Eddie's Wheels (the Rolls Royce of the pet wheels industry) that could fit Stella. After a veterinary assistant screwed and adjusted the wheels on Stella, we watched Stella walk comfortably across the room and then

outside on the pavement and grass. Dr. Loeser met us outside and with a huge smile on her face said, "It looks like these wheels were custom made for Stella." When we asked about renting the wheels, she said, "I know I'm supposed to charge you a monthly fee, but please just take them. All I ask is that you return them when you no longer need them." She refused to bill us for her time and expertise. What an extraordinary veterinarian! We left a donation and of course will honor her request.

So what can we say about our aged and challenged Stella? She is still very loving and loveable. She has benefited from using the wheels outside, but it's still a struggle. She is devoted to us (and we to her) and always wants to be in the same room with at least one of us. She walks with assistance through our home on a trail of carpet runners. When she wants to move or needs to "go," she barks and we respond. She has a healthy appetite, no accidents, and is very responsive. Her energy is limited, but her demeanor is sweet, alert, and content despite her plight. Stella is over 14 (98 in human years). Because of her amazing attitude, we are determined to do whatever it takes to provide her with quality of life. It still isn't her time, but it's not far away. We rely on Dr. VanderBrok's sage advice about a "game changer" occurring when she loses her appetite, becomes incontinent, and keeps to herself. **Until then, we will ensure that our sweet Stella will live as comfortably as "caninely" possible.**

# Growing Green

## Wild Coffee (*Psychotria* spp.)

by Lucy Keshavarz

Florida has three species of Wild coffee plants (*Psychotria* spp.), all of which excel at producing flowers and fruit. These native wild coffees are monoecious evergreen shrubs with large elliptical leaves with conspicuous deep veins. They produce abundant clusters of small white flowers that attract butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. After the flowers fade, bright red elliptical fruit from ¼ to 1/3 inch in size appear that ripen most often in late fall and winter. Wild coffee has a moderate growth rate and occurs in moist wooded habitat that is lightly to densely shaded. Their tolerance for shade, highly textured leaves, and red berries make them a great choice for mass planting under canopy trees or other shady areas where few other plants will thrive.



Shiny-leaf coffee photo by Keith A. Bradley

Bahama coffee photo by George D. Gann



Soft-leaf coffee photos by Steven W. Woodmansee

Wild coffee likes moist, well-drained sandy or limestone soils with a top layer of humus. It can grow in nutrient-poor soils but needs some organic content to thrive. If you are planting it under a shade tree, consider letting the leaf detritus remain to provide natural organic material; however, avoid planting under trees with heavy branches or leaves that fall often or easily. Mulch around the base of the shrub and fertilize with a time-released palm fertilizer in early spring.

Although in the same family as the true coffee tree, the three wild coffees native to peninsular Florida are not tasty to humans.

1. Shiny-leaf coffee (*Psychotria nervosa*) is the most commercially available and widely used species of this genus. In northern Florida it grows to be a 1- to 2-foot ground cover. In south Florida it can reach 4 to 6 feet or more. As the common name implies, its leaves are very shiny and have more pronounced veining or “wrinkled” texture than the other two.
2. Bahama coffee (*Psychotria ligustrina*) has become more available over the last several years. Native to the extreme southern part of Florida, it does well in Palm Beach County. Bahama coffee grows to about 4 feet in height, and while its leaves have obvious veins, they are not as deep as the Shiny-leaf variety.
3. Soft-leaf coffee (*Psychotria sulzneri*) is often found in nature growing beside the Shiny-leaf coffee in the southern half of the state, but it is somewhat lanky and not as dense. It grows to a height of 3 to 4 feet with leaves that are grayish green with a velvet look. It may be hard to find from a nursery, but if you can, planting it with the other varieties offers even more texture. Soft-leaf coffee does not grow as “neatly” as the other two species and may look out of place in the urban yard.

Wild coffees do best where they can maintain their normal growth pattern, which tends to be naturally rounded and about as wide as it is tall. Although I have seen Wild coffee used as a hedge and given a hard cut (down to about 1 foot), it looks best and performs better if hand pruned, pinching a little bit here and there to honor its natural growth pattern and help maintain its flower and berry production.

# KIDS' NEST

## ROSEATE SPOONBILL: FUN AND INTERESTING FACTS

- It was hunted in the latter 1800s for its beautiful feathers used mostly in ladies' hats but also in fans and screens. Ironically, the desirable pink color faded quickly, so the items had a short life span.
- Its head is bald and greenish in color.
- It feeds more by touch than sight; the horny bill detects vibrations of prey, allowing it to feed in cloudy water, water clogged with vegetation, and at night.
- Its nostrils are located at top of the bill, making breathing possible while the bill is under water.
- The oldest, found in the Florida Keys in 2006 and banded in 1990, was 16 years old. Typical lifespan is 8 to 10 years.
- It sleeps standing usually on one leg with head tucked between back and shoulder feathers.
- Chicks' beaks are straight; the spoon shape develops as the chick grows.
- Highly social, it feeds with other spoonbills and other wading birds, nests in colonies, and flies in flocks.
- Its bill is 6 to 7 inches long with a flat end.
- It grows to be about 2-1/2 feet in height with a wing span of 3-1/2 feet to a little over 4 feet.
- It flies in flocks with other spoonbills in long diagonal lines with its neck and legs completely stretched out.

## GREEN ANOLES: A LIMERICK

*(to the beat of Hickory, Dickory, Dock)*

*by Judy Grace*

They're cute, pretty small, and bright green,  
Climbing trees, windows, walls, often seen.  
Pads on feet hold them tight,  
They won't hurt you or bite,  
Unless you're a small bug, I mean.

Their tails, which are long and quite straight,  
If grabbed tight, will come off, and this break  
Gives anole time to act  
While tail-moving distracts  
Any predator like birds, skinks, or snakes.

Male anoles like having their space.  
Any rivals they'll fight with or chase,  
Show their reddish dewlaps  
To scare males or attract  
The few females they like in their place.

Anoles can change color from green,  
Then as brown, gray, or black they are seen.  
But they're fewer these days  
Up in trees, chased away,  
By brown anoles being so mean.

## THE WRONG ANSWER IS THE RIGHT ANSWER

*by Jackie Fabisch*

Choose the letter of the answer that **isn't** correct.

1. WHICH  
doesn't rhyme with anole?  
a. Baloney  
b. Stromboli  
c. Nutty  
d. Cannoli
2. WHAT  
don't you see on the magazine cover?  
a. Suction cup feet  
b. Pink dewlap sac  
c. Window  
d. Palm tree
3. WHO  
wasn't involved in helping Stella the poodle?  
a. Dr. Loeser  
b. Dr. Vander Brok  
c. Dr. Yu  
d. Dr. Rosenberg
4. WHERE  
wouldn't you see an anole?  
a. Caves  
b. Trees  
c. Walls  
d. Windows
5. WHY  
didn't the Schallers want to take down their shutters?  
a. Brighten the space  
b. Watch for raccoons  
c. Unblock the view  
d. See the birds
6. WHEN  
don't wild coffee plants produce bright red fruit?  
a. Autumn  
b. Winter  
c. Summer  
d. Late fall

ANSWERS:  
1. c; 2. d; 3. d; 4. a; 5. b; 6. c