

# Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM  
Volume 27

*Special Edition*



## FLASH FLOODING AT THE MUSEUM



It was well after closing time when water levels receded enough that we were permitted to walk to Main Road to meet our family and friends, leaving our cars behind until the roads were passable.

### *Please help us recover: donate if you can*

Despite plans to close the Museum for a day or two while Sherman Hollow Road could be repaired and an alternate route from the parking lot to the entrance could be designated, the visitors came anyway! The Museum is clearly a favorite destination for friends hosting out of town guests and nature-lovers alike. Even a flash flood couldn't keep them away on a holiday week and for this we are grateful ... we'd rather have a flood of people any day!

However, the truth is: the Museum faces a number of

*Continued on page 2*

**M**any of you may already know about July 3rd's destructive weather in the Huntington area, which caused substantial damage to many homes and habitats.

The *good* news is that the Birds of Vermont Museum's buildings and collection were untouched.

Unfortunately, the torrential downpours turned the normally serene streams through the property into roiling furies as the water rushed to, over, and under the roadway. Sherman Hollow Road disappeared beneath a wide swath of water, which tore into the runoff basin and over the paths to the Museum entrance and the bridge below. Three staff members, two children, and Bob Spear himself watched from the entrance doors as the flash flood sent one entire culvert down the surging rapids, caused trees to slide off their banks, and tumbled rocks in thunderous chaos.



*View across road: entrance to the trails*

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clean-up and repair challenges, from tree removal, stream bank restoration, electrical rewiring, new Museum access design and construction, and restoration of affected walking/birding trails. More needs will surely arise as the layers of debris and mud are scraped away.

In order to recover, the Museum requires funds for services which will address these challenges. We are looking at possible state and federal sources, along with private foundation support. We are also appealing to our members and our community to help the Museum provide our visitors with attractive, accessible, and safe grounds for their visits to this unusual and inspiring institution.

*Whether you have \$5 or \$5000, all of it is helpful (and tax-deductible to the extent the laws allow).*

We also have volunteer opportunities if you have time and we're open for visits and programs too! If you can, please pass the word along. Thank you.

What's your preferred method to donate? We have enabled online donations through JustGive, Network For Good, and PayPal. Checks and donations by credit card are also welcome.

Want updates? Please follow us online (in our blog or on facebook, twitter, or google-plus) for more information and photos. Or call us, drop us a card, or stop by; we're happy to answer questions. *And please help.* At the moment, everything will go into our so-called "Recovery Fund" but we will keep you posted with details about specific projects and allocations.

Thank you so much.

*Bob, Erin, Allison and Kir*



Before



Now (July 2013)

## DONATION INFO

You can call (802) 434-2167 with your credit card info, or send a check in any amount at any time to

Birds of Vermont Museum  
900 Sherman Hollow Road  
Huntington, Vermont 05462

For online donation options, please visit our website, <http://www.birdsofvermont.org>





## A BRIDGE TO A BETTER (WALK)WAY

### *So, how shall we fix this?*


First, we are cleaning up the mess. We've been fortunate enough that donations to date have covered the emergency electrician work and are close to covering the tree removal, the first steps towards repair and replacement. We've received several estimates from by licensed and insured tree removers, and will be working with a local business on this task.

Second, we are blessed with kind, understanding visitors who are willing to walk along the (thankfully quiet) dirt road to the Museum... even though they have to cross a grassy slope and step over the retaining edge to the entrance!

Third, in-kind contributions (time) have already been made by several contractors and museum board members to assess the impact of the disaster, discuss solutions, and plan for the future. Some of the labor and management of the project will be in-kind from volunteers, board members, and friends of the Museum. At least 60 hours of volunteer time have already been donated toward assessment and early clean-up.

The next steps are grant-writing, fundraising, discovering whether funds through FEMA may apply, and fleshing out the recovery plan. The plan includes a boardwalk-style bridge, elevated and more resistant to future flooding, to replace the walkway. This bridge will provide a smoother, more solid access way, have handrails, and will become an exhibit in itself with signage: a safe stop to observe the natural surroundings of the property. There will be additional trail work, restoration, and mitigation measures as well. Much of this needs permitting, design work, materials, and labor. We have been intensely busy working on this process. To date, we have developed a preliminary budget showing our need to be \$31,300.

We're passing the word as we can, from heartfelt blogging by Bob's daughter, Kari Jo Spear, to implementing new donation tools, and to sending out this special edition of *Chip Notes*. We are contacting state representatives, federal agencies, and others for assistance and advice, and to spread the word (you can do this too).

Will this be enough? We won't know for a while yet. We'll stay in touch. As always, your input is welcome. 

## GIVE A HOOT!

Our summer intern, Elizabeth Mitchell Spinney, created a sweet way to help. In her "*Give a Hoot, Get a Hoot*" initiative, visitors to the Museum who donate \$10 or more toward our Rainy Day Recovery are thanked with a handcrafted fiber owl. Within the first two weeks, this effort alone has raised \$200; they are a big hit.

More owls are on display in the Museum, and the colors vary quite a bit as new ones come in from Elizabeth. Come and see!

## NEED SOME COMFORT?

We've recently and coincidentally been given two *Comfort Birds*, carved by Jim Mischel of Texas from Vermont-native Yellow Birch and Northern Hemlock.

Come see these expressions from his 100 Birds project, hold one, and find out more. His website is <http://100birds.mischel.com>.



Elizabeth's "Hoot Owls"

Photo © 2013 E. Spinney and used by permission.



## BOB'S BRIDGE

In the early 1990s, Bob Spear and Doug Hinshaw built a bridge. It was a *good* bridge.

In fact, it *is* a good bridge! It still stands, despite the flood, and despite the fact that the stream washed over, under, around, and through it. It's harder to get to for the moment, to be sure—there now is a fairly large step up to the bridge surface, but what Bob builds, *lasts*.



Top row: Bridge framing, bridge framing, and the bridge as seen last fall.

Bottom row: Eroding path down to the bridge (near the height of the storm), view from the garden path (later on July 3rd), and two from the following day, as seen from the damaged path to the bridge. There's still a little water flowing over the eroded trail.

## HOW ELSE COULD YOU HELP?

We know it's not always possible to send a check to support the Museum and its mission. Never worry: there are many more ways to support your Museum!

- ◆ Volunteer! We need short-shift help (two hours) on Fridays and weekends. You could be a docent or gift shop volunteer!
- ◆ Donate books to our annual Used Book Sale
- ◆ Bring a friend to visit or attend an event
- ◆ Write a review of the Museum
- ◆ Tell someone about our internship opportunities
- ◆ Talk about us online, re-tweet one of our Twitter posts, or like us on Facebook
- ◆ Take a kid birding

## EDITORS NOTE: A SPECIAL EDITION

Due to the events this summer, we have decided to create this special edition of our newsletter. This issue will replace our normal fall edition.

Don't worry; in our next newsletter we will be back with our *Carver's Report*, the *Bird Carver's Daughter*, and our educational series. If you just cannot wait to read bird-related educational articles, see our monthly column online in the Vermont Great Outdoors Magazine (<http://www.vtgreatoutdoorsmag.com/>).

As with any opportunity (planned or unplanned) that comes our way, the support, creativity, and enthusiasm surrounding us allows for great improvement and exciting changes. We look forward to taking full advantage of this one.





## ELIZABETH MITCHELL SPINNEY

### *Summer Intern*

I took a chance and wrote a letter to Erin expressing my interest in learning more about working at a small non-profit in Vermont. Then I couldn't stay away. My husband and I went to the museum the next day to check it out. Fairly quickly into our visit, Erin surmised I was the same Elizabeth who had contacted her, and we ended up doing my interview right then and there! I wanted more experience writing grants and working in a small non-profit setting, both things I had done back in Maine. Lucky for me, the Museum had several capital projects planned, and were looking into grants to fund them.

I spent the next few weeks involved in the development of an Owl display that was placed in the Brownell Library (and is now on display at the Deborah Rawson Library in Jericho), participating in the *Veeries in the Vineyard* program, learning the daily routine of running the Museum, digitizing the library collection catalog, GPSing the trails, blogging my experience, and developing a plan for my main project of the summer.

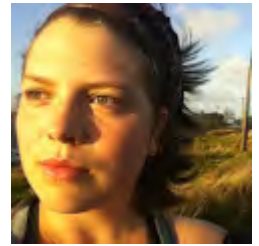
Then the rain came.

I was traveling home to Maine for the 4th of July when I saw the news online. Sitting at the table in Dysart's, I almost started to cry. This amazing place that took me in and so willingly let me express my creativity was

getting washed away. Thankfully, the collection and its curators were safe. I now had a very obvious choice for my main project of the summer: completing several grants for the recovery of the pathway.

To date we have completed one grant application and are currently working on others.

*Elizabeth comes to the Birds of Vermont Museum from Maine, where she earned her M.S. in Biology and her B.S. in Environmental Science. Now a resident of Vermont, she enjoys learning, sharing, crafting, and trying to make a difference.*



## A TREEHOUSE TOO

Before realizing we needed to dedicate this edition to the flood, we had hoped to highlight a new and exciting project—one that expands and extends our offerings. The Museum is building a tree house!

This new structure will be located in our side yard beyond the bird feeding area. Following a path bordered by native plants, visitors will enter into the tree house built on the side of a hill. With just a few feet of elevation gain, this structure will permit views over Sherman brook, across the stream to the tops of the trees, and down the valley to Camels Hump. The walkway and the structure will be accessible to strollers, wheelchairs, and visitors of all ages.

The first phase will begin this fall as a partnership with the Essex Center for Technology. The students will design and build the structure in their workshop, then assemble it onsite. The second phase will be installation of signs, gardens, and program development.

This is a unique opportunity to bring the outdoors one step closer, giving visitors access to the forest canopy while birds sing in the valley below. Assuming we avoid any additional natural disasters in the next few months, you can look forward to hearing more about this through the fall and winter.

### EXTRA THANKS TO:

- ◆ Bernie Sanders' office
- ◆ Patrick Leahy's office
- ◆ Tom Berry
- ◆ Town of Huntington
- ◆ Linda Gionti
- ◆ Kari Jo Spear
- ◆ Bob and Shirley Johnson
- ◆ Bill and Mae Mayville
- ◆ Stewart Kirkaldy
- ◆ Chris Snyder
- ◆ Brian Valentine, David Sunshine, and Dann Van Der Vliet
- ◆ Norman Pellett
- ◆ Dick and Nancy Allen
- ◆ Elizabeth Mitchell Spinney
- ◆ Mad River Forestry, Greg Smith, and Woodscapes Forestry
- ◆ Lori Murphy of Comcast
- ◆ Others who have already offered help—we will be calling!



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS: SUMMER AND FALL 2013

### Birds By Peter Padua

#### Special Carving Exhibit



*Daily* through October 31

Discover the refined carvings of Peter Padua, a 90-year old Middlebury resident and woodcarver. From the sleek pair of Brown Pelicans to the exuberant colors of the Baltimore Oriole and the improbability of a Nene Goose, his carvings bring an extra dimension to our understandings of birds and wood.

*Free* with admission

### The Breeding Bird Atlas: Science and Art

#### Special Exhibit in collaboration with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies

*Daily* through October 31

One book. Eight highlighted birds. Fourteen artists and photographers. Over three hundred citizen scientists. Which birds have expanded into Vermont's changed landscape? What habitats have changed? What species need our focus for better protection? Find out more while delighting in surprising, diverse, and wonderful art.

*Free* with Admission

### Storytime in the Nestlings Nook

*Second Tuesdays* through October • 10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.

Join us for stories about birds and more. Intended for pre-schoolers but all ages are welcome. Stories are followed by a craft project, music or nature walk, depending on the topic and the weather.

*Free* with admission; donations welcome

### Sundays for Fledglings

Most *Sundays* through October • 2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Outdoor science and play for kids ages 6-10. Are you a Junior Birder? Want to become one? Come develop mad skillz in observation, research, and goofing around!

*Free* with admission • Pre-registering is helpful

### Bird Monitoring Walks

Last *Saturdays*, monthly • 8:00 a.m.–9:30a.m.  
August 31 (7:30 a.m.), September 28, October 26,  
November 30, December 28

Join experienced birders on the monthly bird monitoring walk on the Museum's property. Please bring binoculars.

*Free* (donations welcome) • Best for adults and older children with some birding experience.

### 5th Annual Used Book Sale

*Weekends* from August 23 • 10:00 a.m.–4:00p.m.

New books for your life (reading) list! Savvy shoppers stock up on fiction, mysteries, history, biographies, religion, politics, nature, children's books, and, of course, birds!

Fridays-Sundays. Donations of books in good condition are welcome through September 15.

### Birding the Basin: the Back Roads

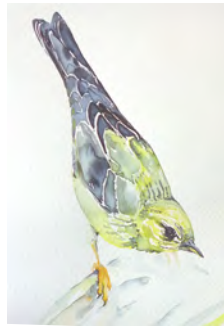
Field Trip with Jim and Kris Andrews  
*Saturday*, September 14 • 8am – 1pm  
Meet at the Green on Orwell, Vermont

Seek out songbirds, shorebirds, raptors and waterfowl, new back roads, and birding hotspots. Ideal for beginners; more experienced birds welcome to share their expertise. Bring a snack and fluids; dress for the early fall weather. We will drive and walk the back roads of western Orwell, Benson, and West Haven.

Fee: \$20 for members of the Birds of Vermont Museum; \$25 for non-members.

Please pre-register (you can pay ahead or at the door) by calling 802 434-2167 or emailing

[museum@birdsofvermont.org](mailto:museum@birdsofvermont.org)



Warbler by N. Tomczak  
*Used by permission*



Interested in volunteering? Watch the website, subscribe to the events calendar, or let us email you with possibilities. You can also call (802) 434-2167 or email [museum@birdsofvermont.org](mailto:museum@birdsofvermont.org)

Please call (802) 434-2167 to pre-register and to confirm times (sometimes they change).

Email us at [museum@birdsofvermont.org](mailto:museum@birdsofvermont.org) with any questions or comments.

### **Wee Turtle Carving Class with David Tuttle**

Saturday, September 21 • 9am – 3pm

Come to a one-day carving class with David Tuttle of the Green Mountain Woodcarvers. We will carve and paint a small Turtle. Wood blank, eyes, snacks, and coffee provided. No carving experience required! Beginners are as welcome as experts. Do bring your tools and gloves if you have them; if you need some, let us know.

\$25 for Museum and GMWC members • \$35 for everyone else • Great for teens and adults.

Call 802 434-2167 to pre-register.

### **Dead Creek Wildlife Festival**

Saturday, October 5

Dead Creek Wildlife Refuge, Addison, Vermont

Join us at Vermont Fish and Wildlife's Annual Festival for all lovers of the outdoors! We will be soap carving 11-12 and 1-2 pm. Stop by or table at other times to visit, shop, and share your carving, decoy, birding, and conservation stories.

Volunteers needed on October 5, at Dead Creek or at the Museum, your preference.

More details at <http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com>

### **Fall Festival / Arts & Crafts Open House**

Saturday, Oct 12, 2013 • 10:a.m. – 4p.m.

Celebrate fall with us! Carving, crafting, and art demos; cider, apples and maybe even chocolate; silent auction and face painting. And that's not even all! We're also seeking musicians, auction donations, and activity or entry table volunteers.

Free for members; \$5 everyone else • Fantastic fun for all!



### **The Big Sit!**

Sunday, October 13 •

Dawn–Dusk

Sit. Watch. Write. Be happy. How many birds can we perceive from a 17-foot diameter circle? Can we beat last year's record? Join the astonishing Jim Osborn and Team Loonatics and find out. If you can't attend, consider a pledge per species!

Free! Snacks and coffee provided. Please bring your own binoculars.



### **Felting Class with Nicol Wander**

Saturday, Oct 26, 2013

Create a needle-felted bluebird brooch with a professional felter and puppeteer.

Register by October 15, please; we need at least 10 to hold the class • \$35 members, \$40 non-members.

### **Snowy Owls**

2013 Lucille Greenough Lecture

Sometime in the fall • 7:00 pm

Discover more about these magnificent and sometimes unexpected birds, with Denver Holt of the Owl Research Institute [www.owlinstitute.org](http://www.owlinstitute.org) Stay tuned for more info.

### **Gift Shop Sales**

October 26-27 and November 30.

Great discounts on end-of-season delights.

Find us online for more information, updates, changes, and additions



All events are at the Birds of Vermont Museum unless noted otherwise.

Check our website for updates and additions:  
<http://www.birdsofvermont.org/events.php>

## SAVE THE DATES

Now— Special Exhibits:  
October *Breeding Bird Atlas: Science and Art  
Birds by Peter Padua*

Sept 14 Birding the Basin

Sep 21 Wee Turtle Carving

Oct 12 Fall Festival / Art & Crafts Open House

Oct 13 The Big Sit!

Oct 26 Bluebird Felting

Monthly: Bird Monitoring Walks (*Last Saturdays*)  
Nestlings (*Second Tuesdays, May—October*)

Weekly: Fledglings (*Most Sundays, May—October*)

Details inside and on our website! To register,  
call (802) 434-2167 or email [museum@birdsofvermont.org](mailto:museum@birdsofvermont.org)

*The mission of the Birds of Vermont  
Museum is to provide education, to nurture an  
appreciation of the environment, and  
to study birds and their habitats using  
woodcarvings and other Museum resources.*

### Board of Trustees 2013

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### Museum Staff

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Erin Talmage, Executive Director  
Allison Gergely, Museum Educator  
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*Please send comments or changes of address to*

The Birds of Vermont Museum  
900 Sherman Hollow Road • Huntington, Vermont 05462  
[museum@birdsofvermont.org](mailto:museum@birdsofvermont.org) • (802) 434-2167

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