

Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM

Volume 30

Early Summer 2016



MORE THAN A BRIDGE

You may recall that in 2013, a terrible downpour washed away our walkway from the parking lot to the Museum's front door. The overflowing water eroded the stream banks on both sides of Sherman Hollow Road, removing much of the gravel from our path, transporting one culvert a quarter-mile downstream and completely dislodging another. Trees toppled over the water, roots ripped from the steeply sloping bank. Trails in the forest were damaged by overwhelming erosion, and forest streams changed courses.

In deciding how best to recover, we didn't just replace a gravel path and reinstall small culverts. Instead, we took the opportunity to take the long-term view: how could we strengthen the Museum's resilience in the face of projected climate changes in Vermont? How could we make the Museum more welcoming and accessible? How could we both protect and enhance the streamside habitat, reducing stormwater runoff and encouraging birds (as well as other pollinators)? These are the

questions that drove our four-phase *Bridges to Birds* project, each phase with its own goals.

And this spring, one of the biggest and most obvious parts of this multi-year project has opened: the actual bridge itself.

Can you imagine the relief and delight we at the Museum feel every time we look out the front doors and see this bridge? It is a joy to have a safe, easy way for visitors of all abilities to enter the Museum; a place where birders have a great view of streamside habitat; an opportunity to install demonstration and teaching plantings; a future location to install educational and welcoming signage. We've seen Eastern Phoebes in and under the bridge; we've seen Spring Salamanders downstream (we hadn't recorded these since before the flood). A Fisher was noticed on a slope near the lower stream. Visitors notice and enjoy Bob's Bridge (the lower one) in a way they hadn't before.

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THE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

Part 11: Battlefields

If birds were my father's first passion, the Civil War was his second. (Family, he pretty much took for granted.) He could fight every battle from memory, including all the skirmishes leading up to it as well as the aftermath, and discuss the finer points of each battle's contribution to the overall picture and its enduring legacies. He focused on the Vermonters, especially his great-grandfather and hero, Alonzo Spear. Yet he always held Robert E. Lee in the highest regard. For a long time, I could never understand why my peace-loving, crowd-hating, and squeamish father had such a fascination for battlefields. When I asked him, all he would say was, "Well, they're kind of interesting."

One day, my father, Gale, and I visited the Hubbardton Battle Field, where Vermont's only Revolutionary War battle had taken place. None of us had ever been there before. In the visitor center was a diorama depicting the various movements of the troops during the engagement. I remember standing there, feeling baffled. My father silently contemplated the scenario for a few moments and then launched into a full explanation. He waved his hands over the diorama like a conductor, commenting on the initial positions of both sides, the strategic fallbacks, the flanking attempts, and the outcome. (We lost. But we Vermonters achieved our goal of halting the British in their tracks long enough to allow the main American force to get away. See, I was listening.)

Unbeknownst to us, a member of the staff had been listening, too. "You must be a scholar of this aspect of the Revolution," he said to my father.

My father shook his head. "Not really. But it's kind of interesting."

When we got outside, I said, "I thought you'd never been here before."

"I haven't. But these battles are really simple compared to the Civil War." In other words, he'd figured the whole thing out in about a minute.

My father really was a scholar of the Civil War. I don't think there is any book, article, or movie he hadn't memorized. About the only reason he'd leave the museum for a vacation was to tour a battlefield. He visited all the major ones, figuring out exactly where Alonzo



*Bob at ... well, not a Civil War site.
This was taken at Fort Ticonderoga some summers ago.*

would have been standing. Poor Gale would often say with a sigh, "We're off to fight the Civil War again." So much for tropical vacations.

This year, one of the high school classes where I assist students did an in-depth study of the Civil War. We read, watched documentaries, and listened to speakers. During class reading time, I found myself researching the 2nd Vermont. When I watched the documentaries, I tried to figure out where my great-great grandfather had been standing. (Yes, he was in the thick of things at Gettysburg, one of the heroic Vermonters who had saved the day and perhaps even turned the tide of the war.) I kept reading more and more. It was addictive. And ancestral.

We spent a lot of time focusing on the military genius of Robert E. Lee. And finally, I began to understand why my father had been so fascinated. Like Lee, my father was a man who planned ahead in a logical way, who studied the lay of the land, who had an instinct for the weather, who knew how to use the sunlight to best advantage, and who had an intuitive sense of how much

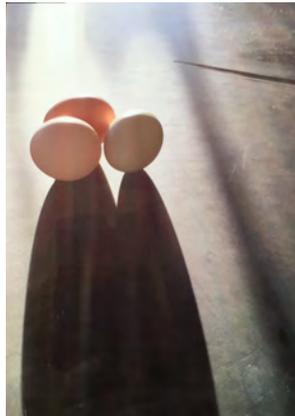
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IN LAYERS: *the Art of the Egg*

What does an egg *mean*, anyway? In art, is it symbolic, illustrative, mystical, practical? What media allow you to consider or express all the layers, physical and otherwise?

This year's community art exhibit starts to approach some of those questions. Vermont artists and photographers share their visions of eggs, potential eggs, future eggs, eggs as a bit of a joke, eggs as an art surface, accidentally-included eggs, eggs as surprises, eggs as metaphor, and eggs before chicks.

Enjoy these few, and visit for more. We will host an Artists' Reception on September 10th.



Artists/Photographers, clockwise from top: Kristin Richland, Sheri Larsen, Thomas Waters, Jean Cannon, Tess Holbrook, Carol McDowell, and Katherine Moran (in center)

The Carver's Daughter: Battlefields (continued)

men and horses could take.

General Spear. It would have been ... interesting.

One day, as I headed for my next class with my students, I hesitated for a moment. I almost thought I'd heard my father's voice echoing down the halls.

"Forward, march!"

Kari Jo Spear, daughter of Bob Spear, is a teacher, a blogger, and an author of young adult novels. She can be found online at <http://karijospear.blogspot.com/>

Earlier stories in the *Carver's Daughter* series are also on our blog, at <https://bovm.wordpress.com/tag/carvers-daughter>



SUMMERING WITH THE MUSEUM

"IN LAYERS: *the ART of the EGG*"

Community art show

Daily, through October • 10am – 4pm

What is an egg? How does art show it, share it, celebrate it, explore it? With new and returning artists, and a wide variety of media, discover the humor, meaning, symbolism and expressiveness of the egg.

Included with admission

EARLY BIRDERS MORNING WALKS

Sundays, May – June • 7:00 – 9:00am

Join us for an early morning ramble in the Birds of Vermont Museum forest and meadows. Walks are led by experienced birders familiar with Vermont birds.

Finish the walk with bird-friendly coffee at the viewing window inside the Museum. Bring binoculars and good walking shoes.

Free, donations welcome

SUNDAYS FOR FLEDGLINGS:

kids explore the world of birds

Most Sundays, May – October • 2:00 – 3:00pm

Discover birds from feathers to flying, from art to zoology. Perfect for kids aged 5-9 (siblings welcome), we offer this program as a series on almost every Sunday from May to October; each Sunday is different! Come to one, some, many or all.



Free with admission • please pre-register to confirm the date

DISCOVERY in the NESTLINGS NOOK

Second Tuesdays, June 14, July 12, August 9, September 13, October 11 • 10:30 – 11:30am

Preschoolers discover birds through stories and investigative play! Books, crafts, music, nature walks and more.

Free with admission

BIRD MONITORING WALKS

Last Saturdays, June 25, July 30, August 27 • 7:30 – 9:00am

Join fellow birders (and would-be birders) on the monthly monitoring walk on the Museum's property. Please bring your own binoculars and dress for the weather. Bug repellent is helpful.

Free

ANNUAL BUG AND BUTTERFLY WALK

Saturday, July 16 • 10 am – noon

Experience Vermont's butterflies and insects up close! Bring binoculars, magnifying glass, and an insect net if you have one. Pack a lunch if you would like to picnic after.

Free • led by the Vermont Entomological Society

FEATHERED "FOLIAGE": *October in Brazil, with Birds*



Thursday, July 28 •
7:00 – 9:00pm

With Shirley's notes complementing Bob's photography, the Johnsons share their experience traveling in southeast Brazil in October.

Be amazed at the colors and lively lifestyles of these birds.

Suggested Donation: \$10

Enjoy wine and cheese before the presentation.

CELEBRATE BRIDGES TO BIRDS with an ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Saturday, July 30 • 2:00 – 4:00pm

We'll officially mark the opening of the bridge today with tributes, conversation, and plenty of ice cream. Bring friends and family!

Donations accepted

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

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

**ARTIVISTS IN ACTION:
Contemporary Environmental
Art and Its
Potential to Transform Society**
Thursday, August 11 • 6:30 – 8:30pm

How can art be used for communication, education and creative problem solving in the face of climate change? Explore how contemporary artists respond to and even solve environmental challenges.

This presentation by Vermont artist Ariel K. Burgess is sponsored by the Lucille Greenough Special Events Fund.

Suggested Donation: \$10
Enjoy wine and cheese before the presentation.

FALL VOLUNTEER WORK PARTY
Saturday, September 10 •
10:00am – 2:00pm

Winter is coming. But Fall is better! Help us get ready, indoors and out.

Sign up in advance for lunch

**ARTIST GATHERING &
RECEPTION**
Saturday, September 10 • 3:00 – 6:00pm
Meet and celebrate the art and artists of
In Layers: the Art of the Egg.

Light refreshments will be served.

CARVING CLASS
Saturday, September 17 •
9:00am – 3:00 pm

Carve and paint a bittern with David Tuttle. Wood blank, eyes, snacks, and coffee provided.

*\$30 for Museum, GMWC members •
\$40 for everyone else*

More events to come!



*Back row, from left: Bill Mayville, Anna Valentine, Brian Valentine, Alex Benevento, Nicole Seaver, John Gergely, Allison Gergely, Josh Lincoln
Front row, from left: Kerry Hurd, Brenda Waters, Darlene Palola, Linda Hurd, Mae Mayville, Bob Johnson, Shirley Johnson, Elizabeth Spinney, Erin Talmage
Not shown: Erny Palola, Anne Dannenburg*

VOLUNTEER WORK PARTY

In April, these helpful people generously shared their time to prepare the Museum for its seasonal opening. They marked, trimmed, and cut trees from the trails; cleaned out garden beds; set up the Un/natural trail and storywalk; and finished assorted small and large spring cleaning and maintenance tasks.

After lunch, we walked out to admire the then-unfinished bridge (and took advantage of it for our photo).



Many more thanks are due to these additional volunteers, makers, donors, and workshop leaders:

- ◆ Rita Sloan
- ◆ Bryan Pfeiffer
- ◆ Bradley Materick
- ◆ Karen Ballard (Vermont Tourism Network)
- ◆ Students from Vermont Commons School
- ◆ Amy Alfieri
- ◆ Elizabeth Spinney
- ◆ Dick Allen
- ◆ Brenda Waters
- ◆ Dwight Cargill
- ◆ Lynn Sipse
- ◆ Debbie Duvall
- ◆ in memory of Helena Talmage, Paul and Leona Hurd, Bob Spear, and Vicki Washburn

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

More Than A Bridge (continued from page 1)

As we move on to the next tasks (gardens, celebrations, and continuing trail work), we'd like to pause to recognize that we could not have come here without you. Members and friends and donors of all sorts helped the Birds of Vermont Museum repair, restore, and protect the streambed between our parking lot and front door. Your efforts and contributions provided a bridge that is wide, comfortable, accessible, and beautiful. It complements the Treehouse (built in 2014), is easily reached from the regraded parking lot (2015 and 2016), crosses the restored and stabilized streambanks (2015), and welcomes visitors along a gentle curve with many points of view.

You can read more about another phase, the *Pollinator Gardens*, on page 7 in this issue.

In the meantime, and in no particular order, *thank you* to:

- Dean Grover (Grover Engineering)
- Mike Ovitt (Woodscapes)
- David Tuttle and the Green Mountain Woodcarvers
- Barbara Elliot and the Huntington Select Board
- Birds of Vermont Museum's Board of Directors
- Linda Gionti
- Libby Davidson
- Denver Holt
- Gale Lawrence
- Erny and Darlene Palola
- Magnus and Susan Stien
- Ingrid and Graeme Rhind
- Michaela Stickney
- Josh Ryan and crew (Timber & Stone, LLC)
- Yogi Alger and the Town of Huntington Road Crew
- John Scott and crew (John Scott Excavating)
- Engineering Ventures
- Charley MacMartin (Queen City Soil and Stone)
- Aaron Smith and Jonathan LaBate (Champlain Landworks)
- Vermont Better Backroads Program
- Vermont Ecosystem Restoration Program
- Vermont Community Foundation
- Vermont Arts Council
- Center for Technology Essex
- Northeast Delta Dental
- Essex Rotary
- Representative Tom Stevens
- Senators Bernie Sanders and Patrick Leahy, and their offices
- and many generous private donors of time, funds, or items for our fundraisers.



Birding report

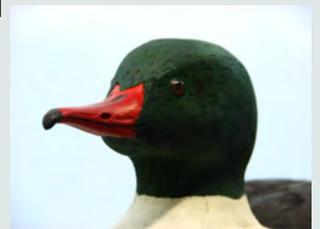
What a great set of Early Birder walks we've been hosting this year. There's been a lot of birding-by-ear (and practice in that) as May turned into June and the foliage thickened. There have been some songs that we've easily recognized and others much more challenging! As an aside: several of our birders happen to also be excellent bakers who share treats during the post-walk coffee and conversations.

Thanks to several people, we now have an additional webcam. This is helpful for security, but also has revealed early morning American Crows and a Barred Owl perched on the feeder itself in the middle of the night.

Bird monitoring and Early Birder records are uploaded to eBird, at <http://ebird.org/ebird/vt/hotspot/L282687> We encourage you to keep an eye on these online reports, since they generally are updated several times between newsletters, with more detail.

Carving Report

We're thrilled to add **Dick Allen's** male Common Merganser to our Spring Wetlands diorama. See



it amid the other waterfowl; can you spot other changes in this exhibit?

Dave Tuttle continues to be generous with his time and skill, leading carving classes, holding carving demonstrations during Open Studio weekend, and creating carving for *Bridges to Birds* and for the Gift Shop.

Green Mountain Woodcarvers are hosting their annual carving class from August 17 - August 19. The 43rd annual carving show will be Saturday, August 20, at the Rusty Parker Park in Waterbury.

POLLINATOR GARDENS

Lately, the decline of native pollinators and honey bees has been making headlines. The roles pollinators play in ecosystems, our agriculture food systems, local and national economics, and our lifestyles have increased our awareness of their importance. Pollinators are needed for 70% of our food crops. Some key Vermont products, *e.g.*, apples, tomatoes, and blueberries, are dependent on pollinators. Plants important to our basic happiness, like cocoa and coffee, also need pollinators. Enhancing, restoring, and creating habitat for pollinators benefits nearby farms, forests, and gardens as well.

Therefore, as part of the Museum's *Bridges to Birds* project, we are creating gardens, starting with the restored stream banks, that increase habitat for wildlife, birds, and native pollinators; prevent erosion; and offer educational opportunities. Different areas around the Museum building will highlight different plant groups and planting/maintenance regimes.

The steep streambanks, which need strong erosion resistance, will support a combination of shrubs, perennials, and water-loving plants. This area will become a demonstration site for a meadow-like style along a sloped bank.

On the museum side of the stream, the bank will showcase a small, dense garden with shorter plants and a slightly more manicured style.

Adjacent to the museum entrance, which has different drainage needs and receives intermittent water flow, we will incorporate a rain garden. Wetland and water-tolerant species will contribute to stormwater control.

Additional areas will demonstrate what can be planted along upland roadsides, in kitchen gardens, near forest shade, or for the backyard gardener focused on aesthetics.

The plant species we choose are native or of a native variety (with a some exceptions) and have not been treated with pesticides or neonicotinoids, a systemic plant toxin. That last is necessary as neonicotinoid residues can be taken up by the pollinator when feeding on nectar—even some time after planting. In some

situations and concentrations, these doses can be lethal.

Many of these plants provide food for birds directly. Insect pollinator species themselves often provide food for birds as well.

In addition to the local habitat effects of each garden and visitor opportunities, we hope these focus gardens will teach gardeners and homeowners more about what they can do to create bird- and pollinator-friendly habitat.

Initial work on our gardens is thanks to former interns Nic Cormier, Ally Chapman, and Anna Veitch. Anne Dannenberg of Huntington, Vermont, has taken over the comprehensive planning and has done countless hours of work researching, planning, and planting. We are indebted to Anne and are in awe of her knowledge and dedication to Vermont's native pollinators.

Funding for the gardens has come from individual donors, the Department of Environmental Conservation, Vermont Electric Co-operative, and a partnership with the Huntington Historical and Community Trust, which received a grant from the Norcross Foundation. Individual gardeners and nurseries have assisted with advice and/or plants, including Jane Sorenson of River Berry Farm, Daniel Redondo of Vermont Wetland Nursey, Cobble Creek, Arcana Gardens and Greenhouses, and Perennial Pleasure Nursery. Staff also benefited from the "Beetles, Bees, Butterflies" symposium hosted by Vermont Agency of Natural Resources.



Rain garden and its stone retaining wall, just to the side of the Museum entrance. Plants have not yet grown in.

SAVE THE DATES

- July 16 Annual Bug and Butterfly Walk
- July 28 *Feathered "Foliage"* presented by Shirley Johnson
- July 30 Bridge Celebration
- August 11 *Artivists in Action* presented by Ariel Burgess
- Sept 10 Volunteer Work Party and Artists' Reception
- Sept 17 Carving Class
- Last Saturdays* Bird Monitoring Walks
- Most Sundays* Sundays for Fledglings
(birds, science, and art for 5-9 year olds)
- Second Tuesdays* Discovery & Stories for Nestlings
(pre-schoolers)

Details inside and on our website! To register, call (802) 434-2167 or email 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.

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