

CHIP NOTES

The Newsletter of
The Birds of Vermont Museum



Volume 19

Our Nineteenth Year

Fall 2005

MUSEUM TO HOST FALL FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 8

YOU ARE INVITED!

The Birds of Vermont Museum is sponsoring its annual Fall Festival on October 8th from 9:30 – 4:00 pm. Come visit the Museum, participate in special activities and walks, and enjoy apple cider and donuts on Sherman Hollow Road in Huntington when foliage is at its peak!

9:30 – 4:00 pm.

Visit the Museum FREE and enjoy the 464 carvings and the bird viewing window. Participate in the “People’s Choice” voting for the 1st Annual Children’s Art Contest.

9:30 – 10:30am

Foliage walk with Michael Snyder, Chittenden County Forester. Explore the beauty of the 100 acres surrounding the Museum with one of Vermont’s most knowledgeable naturalists.

10:00 – 2:00pm

Green Mountain Wood Carvers carving in Bob Spear’s wood shop.

11:00 -12:30pm

Carol Winfield’s popular live bird show is back! See live hawks and owls up close.

1:30 – 2:30pm

Foliage walk with Michael Snyder.

VISIT OUR NEW WEB CAM

The Museum has recently installed a web camera focused on the bird feeders outside the popular bird viewing window. The web cam is on 24 hours a day, and can be seen by going to the Museum website at www.birdsofvermont.org. See your favorite birds at the feeders, and Bob Spear who fills the feeders morning and evening! A very special thank you to The George W. Mergens Foundation and Bobbie Summers who funded the purchase of the web cam, and to volunteers Jay Lowe and Bruce Blackman for installing the camera for all to enjoy.

MONARCH MIGRATION

The male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds left the Museum's bird feeding area by Labor Day, and the last female Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were seen at the Museum on September 12. Migration for these birds has started, and they are probably in Central America by the time you are reading this article. Some birds migrate small distances, and some birds migrate great distances and do such amazing feats we can only fall slack-jawed and think "how do they do that?" But birds aren't the only animals that migrate.

Have you thought much about butterfly migrations? We can't help but be amazed when we hear of the 3.2 gram Ruby-throated Hummingbird who flies to the edge of the Gulf of Mexico, and then non-stop over water for more than 500 miles. But our awe of nature only grows when we think of the Monarch Butterfly, who one day is outside sampling the goldenrod in our backyard, and the next embarking on a 2000 mile and two month journey ending in the mountains of Mexico.



Birds have been known to navigate during migration using a variety of tools including solar and celestial clues, magnetism, topographic features and even odors. How the Monarch navigates is a mystery scientists are currently trying to figure out. Many scientists now think sunlight is an important feature to how the Monarch migrates. Regardless of how they navigate, unlike birds, the Monarchs that find their way south are not the same ones that travel north the next spring.

A Monarch's life cycle has four distinct stages, in bug-speak that means they have complete metamorphosis. An adult lays her eggs (a few hundred) on a milkweed leaf. The caterpillar hatches and then spends its days eating, eating and more eating. Within a week and a half the caterpillar could be up to two inches long. As the caterpillar grows it molts its skin. The final molt produces the chrysalis, where the caterpillar metamorphoses into the adult butterfly. The adult usually begins courting immediately and only lives for a few weeks. The adults emerging in August are usually the ones heading to Mexico to spend the winter.



This generation lives longer than the other generations. When spring arrives they mate and start flying north, the female will lay her eggs and soon after dies. The next few generations continue to move north, some traveling as far as Canada. It is the third or the fourth generation that arrives in Vermont to lay eggs. Some of the adults we see in late summer or early fall are actually migrating from Canada through the state towards Mexico. In other words, the great-great-grandchildren of the butterflies that left Mexico in the spring are the ones that head to Mexico in the fall!

The Monarch is Vermont's State Butterfly.

VOLUNTEER LUNCH

On Sunday, October 9th, the museum is honoring our hard working volunteers with a Volunteer Lunch at noon. It is not necessary to bring food, but we do enjoy all your culinary efforts. It has been a pleasure to work alongside all of you, from 10-year-olds to 80 plus. Our volunteers range from home-schooled students to university professors to retired business women.

Many projects have been started and are on-going, such as library reorganization, weighted pillows representing the accurate weights of our Vermont birds, wildflower and fern guides, and outdoor trail maintenance. We have a great butterfly guide, and a laminated trail and habitat guide both compiled by volunteers. This year our docents have had to adjust to a new cash register system, new phones, and a new credit card machine. All have graduated with flying colors. Our Board of Trustees is re-energized and is leading us along a greater path. Because of our volunteers, our visitors have had the best possible educational and fun experience. We hope that all of our volunteers can come to the lunch and be thanked by us personally.



Board Members Shirley Johnson and Bob Jervis serving ice cream at Bob Spear's 85th birthday party.

BIG SIT!

You are all invited to participate in the Big Sit, on Sunday, October 9th, from 6 a.m. until dark. Hundreds of teams from around the world participate each year. Join the "Loonatics" for an hour or the whole day. This is a fun activity which takes place in a 17 foot circle behind the museum, next to the bird feeder area. The idea is to identify as many bird species as possible from the circle during a 24 hour period (we're doing just daylight hours.) At least one person must be in the circle at all times. If you step outside the circle you cannot count any new birds you hear or see. You must return to the circle to continue the count. There will be plenty to eat and drink (the volunteer lunch is the same day and we'll have plenty of food), and there will be bird experts on hand all day. We also have an outdoor fireplace and a canopy in case of rain. Come for as many hours as you can.

This event is also a fund raiser, and many of our participants get people to pledge money for each species seen. Typically it has been around 27 species. You don't necessarily need sponsors to participate in the Big Sit. Just bring warm clothes and a smile.



The Black-capped Chickadee is one bird you are almost guaranteed to see and hear while participating in the Big Sit!

If you wish to become involved, and would like to meet many of our current volunteers, come to our Volunteer Lunch. Please RSVP by calling Ingrid at 434-2167.

BIG CHANGES FOR SOME MUSUEM VOLUNTEERS

The Museum says good bye and good luck to two of our volunteers, Peter Jenkins and Eva Dannenberg.

Peter and Eva were introduced to the Museum through Gale Lawrence. Gale began mentoring the students on the art of nature writing two and a half years ago. The result of that relationship was a monthly nature column in the *Times Ink* written and illustrated by Peter and Eva. Their column was both personal and factual and covered topics from Lady Slippers to singing Toads.

From their work with Gale, they also learned about volunteer opportunities at the Museum and they expanded their circle, walked next door and we put them to work! Since that time, together and separately, they have volunteered for countless hours at the Museum and have worked on a variety of projects.

Peter worked with Aaron Worthley of Arrowwood Environmental to create a land use cover map of the entire museum property. The map is displayed in the entry way of the museum. It is also available to researchers or students working on the property.

Peter and Eva also collaborated on two guides they created for the Museum. They ventured into the woods from spring of 2004 through late summer 2005, taking pictures, writing notes and drawing inspiration from the flowers and ferns they found. In addition, they wrote plant descriptions for most of the species they saw on the property. Combined they wrote over 150 plant descriptions!

Throughout the fall, we are printing the pictures and putting the albums together. If you are interested in learning about ferns or wildflowers found on the Museum property stop by and take a look at this amazing piece of work.

When speaking with Gale about these students she expressed what we all are thinking:

"I enjoyed working with such motivated and responsive students, and I'm very proud of the fact that they're now off to college."

Peter and Eva are both students at The College of the Atlantic in Maine, we wish them both well.



Peter Jenkins and Eva Dannenburg playing music at The Museum's 2004 Fall Festival

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

Bob Spear poses with a group of students that traveled from China. This trip was coordinated by Vermonter, Peter Lynch from Green Across the Pacific, an organization whose mission is to improve cultural and environmental awareness and cooperation between North American and Asian countries.

Photo courtesy of Green Across the Pacific.



BIRD RESEARCH ON THE HUNTINGTON IBA

In May of 2004, the Museum property combined with the Green Mountain Audubon Center's property and became an Important Bird Area (IBA). Since becoming an IBA, the Museum has been working with Vermont Audubon to better manage the property for birds, and to further our educational efforts. We collaborated this spring (2005) with a service learning project through the University of Vermont's Field Naturalist program. The students produced a document describing the geology, cultural history, the natural communities, and some management recommendations for the entire IBA.

This summer we continued the work. Through a grant from The Vermont Community Foundation we were able to hire Matt Kolan, a PhD student from the University of Vermont, to set up point counts throughout the property and collect data on breeding birds.

Point counts are a standard way to inventory birds on a property. The advantages of this technique are that it is repeatable, and it can be used as a potential citizen science project.

With the help of those who know this property (staff from Vermont Audubon and the Birds of Vermont Museum and the Field Naturalist students), Matt set up 29 points throughout the entire property. Points were placed to detect birds in various habitats, yet were placed far enough away from each other so as not to detect the same bird twice. "It was a bit of a jigsaw puzzle" commented Matt.

Using Forest Bird monitoring protocols, he incorporated the 5 points that have been surveyed since 1997 by Mark LaBarr on the Green Mountain Audubon property and added 24 other points. The points ranged from alongside the river to the Red Pine forest to the early successional habitat above the Museum pond.

Points were surveyed twice this year; once before June 15 and once after. The goal is to continue with these point counts on the entire IBA each year to

look for trends in bird populations.

In addition to point counts, other data have and will continue to be collected on the property including collecting breeding bird information for the Breeding Bird Atlas, holding monthly IBA monitoring walks, bird banding on the Green Mountain Audubon property, and working out the details for setting up a saw-whet owl banding station this fall.

Matt held a point count workshop in early September to let interested parties be aware of the project and to talk to potential volunteers about participating next year by helping out with a few point counts in June. We are planning to hold another workshop in the spring. This workshop will be for staff, volunteers and students. Anyone interested in learning what point counts are, are welcome to attend.

The entire project will be written up and be stored at Green Mountain Audubon and in the Birds of Vermont Museum Library. If you have any questions or are interested in learning about the spring point count workshop or volunteering, please contact Erin Talmage at the Museum.



Matt Kolan looking for nesting birds at the Birds of Vermont Museum.

FIBER OPTIC LIGHTING PROJECT COMPLETED

The Museum has recently completed installing fiber optic lighting. The project was started early in 2004 and recently completed thanks to the generosity of many friends and donors of the Museum. Fiber optic lighting provides a more realistic and natural light that can be pin-pointed in a display to show the most important features of birds and their habitats. Fiber optic lighting is also a cooler light, and has no ultraviolet or infra-red light. Therefore, the 464 woodcarvings will not only be better illuminated but also better preserved and not damaged by the heat of the previous lighting source.

Design work and technical assistance to install the new lighting was provided by Ruth and Michael Miller of NoUVIR Research, located in Seaford, Delaware. NoUVIR provides consultation and fiber optic lighting to museums worldwide, and is recognized as an industry leader. Installation of the new lighting was done by Bob Spear, Ingrid Brown, and Eric Lazarus.

A very special thank you to all our donors who made this wonderful improvement possible.

- Bob Coon
- Corning Incorporated Foundation
- Jack Dempsey
- John Ewing
- Deb & Don Lauper
- George W. Mergens Foundation
- John & Carole Opel
- Roger Perry
- Sally Robinson
- Bob Spear
- Bobbie Summers
- Vermont Arts Council

Come visit the Museum and see the new fiber optic lighting, and the wonderful way the displays appear with this new lighting.

VOLUNTEERS!

On the left: Bob Spear poses with some of our younger volunteers (left to right Crystal Lanpher, Alaria Lanpher, Kaitlynn Miller and Hannah Miller).

On the right: Florence Paris greets visitors with a friendly smile.



MUSEUM RECEIVES GIFT FOR ENDOWMENT

The Birds of Vermont Museum has received an anonymous gift of \$25,000 which was added to the Birds of Vermont Museum Fund at the Vermont Community Foundation. The Fund is the endowment for the Museum and is managed by the Vermont Community Foundation. Endowed funds are invested with a portion of the interest designated for ongoing Museum annual expenses. Typically, endowment principal remains invested and grows over time to provide a higher amount of interest to sustain operations at the Museum.

“We are delighted, and grateful for the enormous generosity of this donor,” commented Bob Johnson, President of the Board of Trustees. “Endowed funds enable the Museum to grow into the future, and this very generous gift will ensure the Museum will be enjoyed by generations to come,” Johnson concluded.

The Birds of Vermont Fund was created in 1998 and has been steadily growing during the past seven years. To make a contribution to this Fund, write a check to the Birds of Vermont Museum Fund and mail it to the Vermont Community Foundation, P.O. Box 30, Middlebury, VT 05753. All contributions are tax deductible.

STAFF HAPPENINGS

Congratulations to Museum staff who have been in the news!

- Bob Spear was featured on the cover of *Vermont Maturity* magazine in the April 2005 edition. The magazine also carried a feature story on Bob’s life and accomplishments as Founder of the Birds of Vermont Museum.
- Ingrid Brown, Curator, was elected President of the Green Mountain Wood Carvers. As President, Ingrid will give leadership to an organization of 160 members from throughout Vermont who promote the art of woodcarving.
- Erin Talmage, Biologist, recently graduated from Leadership Champlain, a leadership development program sponsored by the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce. Erin has also been selected as a team member for the Rotary Club group study team traveling to Belize in February 2006.



Ken Lucy, Museum volunteer and citizen scientist, working on the Museum’s Natural/Unnatural trail keeping it clean, and making sure all the unnatural items are there, and well hidden.

Have you found them all?

SAVE THESE DATES

October 8 Fall Festival
October 9 Volunteer Lunch
October 9 Big Sit!
Every Sunday at 2 PM—Nature Walk

For additional information, or to register,
please call 434-2167.

Thanks to Northeast Delta Dental for
supporting our newsletter.



**Visit our website to learn more great things about
the Museum, and details of all of our upcoming
programs.**

www.birdsofvermont.org

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Dave Johnson, Museum Director
Erin Talmage, Museum Biologist

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