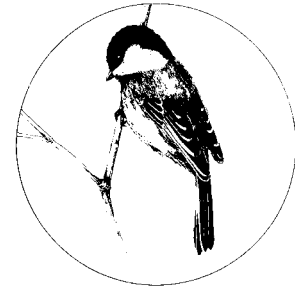


CHIP NOTES

The Newsletter of
The Birds of Vermont Museum



Volume 21

Our Twenty-first Year

Winter2007

HELP BOB CELEBRATE 87 YEARS WITH CAKE, ICE CREAM, AND BIRDS.

Bob Spear, the Founding Director of the Birds of Vermont Museum, will celebrate his 87th birthday on February 21st. All friends and members of the Museum are invited to the Museum on Saturday, February 17th from 2-4 p.m. to help Bob celebrate with birthday cake and fellowship.

On that same day, the Museum is participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count, a citizen science project organized by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The Museum and its visitors will count from 2:00–4:00 p.m. The count goes from February 16-19th and anyone can participate from their own home or a nearby park. For more information, to download material, take a bird quiz, or check out the kid's activities go to <http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc/>

Members and non-members who are interested in participating in the bird count are invited to the Museum on February 17th to observe different species of birds. Come learn about backyard birds, practice identification skills, learn about other citizen science projects, and meet Bob Spear, Master Carver.

In 2006, participants nationwide sent in more than 60,000 checklists with a record breaking total count of more than 7.5 million birds and over 620 species. This project has become a major source of scientific information about North American bird populations, and is a classic example of the vital role citizens play in understanding bird populations.

Admission to the Museum is **free** on February 17th.

Those wishing to honor Bob's birthday are encouraged to make an \$87 contribution to the Birds of Vermont Museum Fund at the Vermont Community Foundation. Checks should be made out to the Birds of Vermont Fund and mailed to the Museum at 900 Sherman Hollow Road, Huntington, VT 05462

Thank you for your support!



HOW MANY CARVINGS?

We recently received an email from a man who had just acquired one of Bob Spear's carvings. A friend had found it in an antique store in Massachusetts. When he turned it over he saw Bob Spear's name on the bottom, inspiring him to get in touch with Bob.

Hearing the story prompted me to ask Bob, "Just how many birds have you carved?"

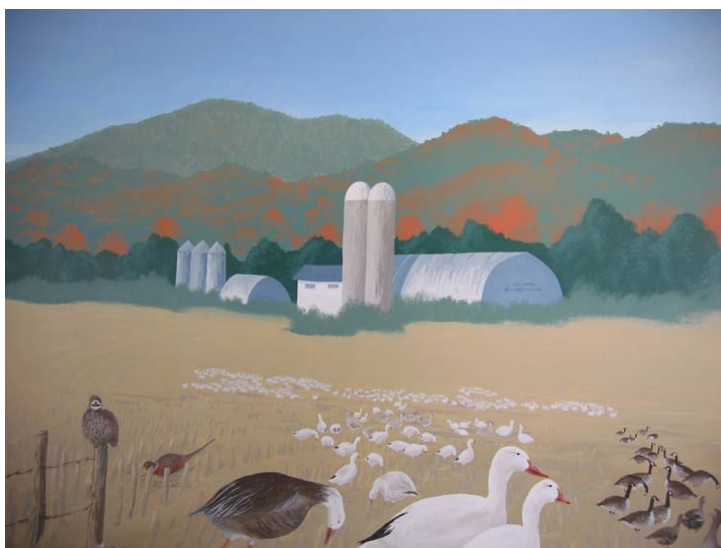
A few years ago I put together a database with details of all the Museum's carvings (including birds carved for the raffle). We discovered that the 481 completed carvings done by Bob Spear took him 17,282 hours of carving. What I had not realized was how many carvings he had completed before starting the Museum. I knew of his first carving, and a few others that he finished in the 1930's, as they are on display in the Museum. Starting in the 1950's Bob carved many small birds and sold them to various craft stores around the northeast including The Tourist Trap in Franconia Notch, New Hampshire, Three Green Doors in Stowe, Vermont, and Johnny Appleseeds in Beverly, Massachusetts. According to his records, he primarily carved chickadees, nuthatches, juncos, cardinals, wrens, and woodpeckers. All together he created over 1000 carvings sold through stores and to individuals. If you ever see one please let us know. We would love to find out just how far his work has traveled.

Erin Talmage



A Downy Woodpecker carving done by Bob Spear sometime in the 1960's.

UPDATE ON THE FALL WETLAND DIORAMA



Portion of the Fall Wetland Diorama showing Libby's rendition of the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area. Photo taken in December 2006.

While Bob and Ingrid are upstairs carving. Libby Davidson has been downstairs working on the background of the Museum's Fall Wetland Diorama. The background shows a rendition of lower Lake Champlain and Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area in Addison County, Vermont. Thousands of Snow Geese migrate through Dead Creek every fall. It is also a great place to see many other birds - not to mention other animals throughout the year.

Part of the mural shows Split Rock Point in New York, where Lake Champlain narrows. In the fall migrating birds are condensed in this area of the lake providing ideal spots for birders to see some rare migrants.

As always Libby's work is biologically accurate and visually beautiful.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

As of January 1, 2007 our Museum Director, Dave Johnson has retired for a second time. Dave had previously retired after a long and successful career at the YMCA. Just as his first retirement was kicking in, four years ago, a friend suggested he visit the Birds of Vermont Museum. Soon he was hired as Museum Director. In his four-year term as Director, Dave made some big changes in the Museum. He greatly improved the Museum's infrastructure by updating computers, the cash register, and the phone system. He improved the accountability of the Museum's finances, and created and streamlined the protocols and procedures of the Museum. In addition, he worked to increase Board of Director participation, and develop a Strategic Plan. Under Dave's leadership, the Museum also has replaced exhibit lighting with fiber optics, started a wetland diorama, and replaced the roof. Dave has spent the last month training Erin Talmage as Interim Director. Erin has worked for the Museum for the last four years as the Museum Biologist. She looks forward to her new role.



Erin Talmage takes over Museum Director duties as Dave Johnson retires.

We want to wish Erin good luck in her new position and thank Dave for all he has done in the last four years and wish him luck in his "retirement."

The Birds of Vermont Museum is truly a gem in Vermont, and one of the best kept secrets in Vermont. Bob Spear's work is remarkable, and visitors have told us that the entire staff is very personable and knowledgeable about birds and their habitats. I have enjoyed my last four years at the Museum, and look forward to frequent return visits to see the progress of the turkey (Bob's largest carving) and the new fall diorama. In the interim, I have "book marked" the bird cam so I can visit every day! Best of luck to the staff and volunteers as you continue your important work to educate more Vermonters and visitors from around the world.

Dave Johnson

My introduction to the Museum began as a volunteer in 1994. I was reacquainted with the Museum in 2003 when I was hired as the Biologist. I have enjoyed my different roles and look forward to my new role as Interim Director. Since being here I have had the pleasure of spending time looking for birds with Bob, talking with volunteers, working with other in the Museum community, and introducing kids and adults to the wood carvings. I appreciate the on-going support from Dave, Bob, Ingrid, and the Board. I look forward to continuing to work with all of them to fulfill the goals of the strategic plan and the mission of the Museum.

Erin Talmage

Missed a newsletter? Check out old issues and color photos on our website

www.birdsofvermont.org

ON BECOMING A CARVER

Learning to carve from a Master Carver of Bob Spear's caliber is a privilege only a few people will experience. I must have done something right in life to have landed a great job in a wonderful museum, and to have been hand picked by Bob to become his protégé. Granted, I'm not just anybody off the street; I have many intensive years of art courses under my belt, spanning three countries and more than 30 years. I have had instruction from drawing, painting and printmaking, to sculpture, a three-dimensional form of expression to which I had never related well. Nevertheless, Bob must have seen something in me to put the effort into making a wood carver out of me.



Transforming me from two dimensions to three started with traditional instruction about wood selection, tool usage, and making templates. I then carved my first project, a Red-breasted Nuthatch. Bob was pleased, and I began to hone my abilities on Bob's carvings, under strict supervision, on surfaces not visible to visitors. I carved, I painted, and I burned feather patterns, until one day I was to do a bird from start to finish, a small shorebird, the Semipalmated Plover. A few more followed: the Solitary Sandpiper, the Greater Yellowlegs, and half of the Lesser Yellowlegs. All can be seen in the Spring Wetland Diorama. In the workshop, waiting for Bob to teach me to make legs, is the otherwise finished Herring Gull, my largest carving thus far. My next projects will be three more gulls: the Great Black-backed, the Bonaparte's, and the Ring-billed.

Bob's list of carvings to do is being revised as he plans which birds go in which diorama. Some of the unusual or lesser-known ones will be painted on the wall by Libby Davidson. There are 50 or more wetland birds still to carve, and when these are completed Bob plans to carve 100 Vermont butterflies with all



Ingrid has been working on a Herring Gull carving. It will be displayed in the Spring Wetland diorama by the time we open in May of 2007.

the life stages and favorite plant. Bob and I carved the Canadian Tiger Swallowtail as a prototype, which includes two males and a female on a lilac blossom.

This is an incredible experience for me; Bob Spear, Master Carver, totally self-taught, teaching me his techniques and methods so I can help him fulfill his dream. There is much to be done, much to learn, and many tools to sharpen.

Ingrid Brown

ALL ABOUT BIRDS

The Birds of Vermont Museum is teaming with Green Mountain Audubon center to offer students and teachers a day long program to learn about birds. Students will delve into the fascinating world of birds outside at the Audubon Center and inside at the Birds of Vermont Museum. They will be introduced to bird adaptation, migration, identification, and conservation issues.

Green Mountain Audubon's bird program is designed to engage students in a variety of outdoor activities. By walking the property students will enter habitats to see and hear birds in the wild. Students will learn about bird song, they will observe bird nests and eggs and they will have the opportunity to use binoculars and age-appropriate field guides to practice their bird watching skills.



Students taking a break, while enjoying lunch and sunshine.

After completing the outdoor portion of the program. Students will arrive at the Birds of Vermont Museum. The students will have the opportunity to see over 250 species of birds. Students will be given age-appropriate scavenger hunts to help focus their attention as they travel through the Museum. All scavenger hunts were designed to coincide with Vermont's Grade Expectations

We hope the students will have fun and will be inspired by what they see, do, and learn on this trip! If you are a student or a teacher or know any students or teachers please pass this information on. We hope to inspire and educate as many people as possible about birds and all their wonder.

MUSEUM WISH LIST

- \$510** Assistance with creation of a Museum Audio Guide. We have looked into various ways to help our visitors learn about birds songs. We would like to purchase three ipods for use in 2007. We will load them with bird songs to allow Museum visitors to hear specific bird songs and calls as they walk through the Museum. If this type of technology works we hope to expand the program to allow school groups to use them in 2008. (3 ipods @ \$170 each)
- \$290** A three shelf bookshelf to be used in the bird viewing area. We would like to make our field guides and other books easily available to visitors and school groups.
- \$699** Adobe In-Design CS Software. We would like to improve the software that we currently use to create brochures and newsletters.

SPRING SCHEDULE

- February 17** Bob's 87th Birthday Celebration and Backyard Bird Count, 2-4 p.m. Free.
- April 23 – 27** Museum open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
- April 23 and 24** School Vacation Programs: 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Ongoing 1 hour soap carving class. Carve a cardinal or a turtle. Limit 8 kids at a time. Ages 7 and up. Ongoing kids activities for younger siblings. Admission: Adults \$6, Kids 3-17 \$3, soap carving class \$10 (includes admission), Seniors \$5.
- May 5** Volunteer Lunch and Work Party. Lunch at 12 noon. Great opportunity to clean up trails, weeds, and general preparations for our May 12th International Migratory Bird Day event. More info in the April newsletter.
- May 12** International Migratory Birds Day. Audubon Vermont and Birds of Vermont Museum join together to celebrate Migratory Birds. There will be bird walks, kids' activities, a live bird show, and a raffle.

Adaptations

House Sparrow

Driveway Dust Bather

Lover of Pavement, Dancer on Blacktop

You are a cedar chip on wings

Your world is my world;

a suburban oasis

We moved only slightly from under
the wheel of "progress"

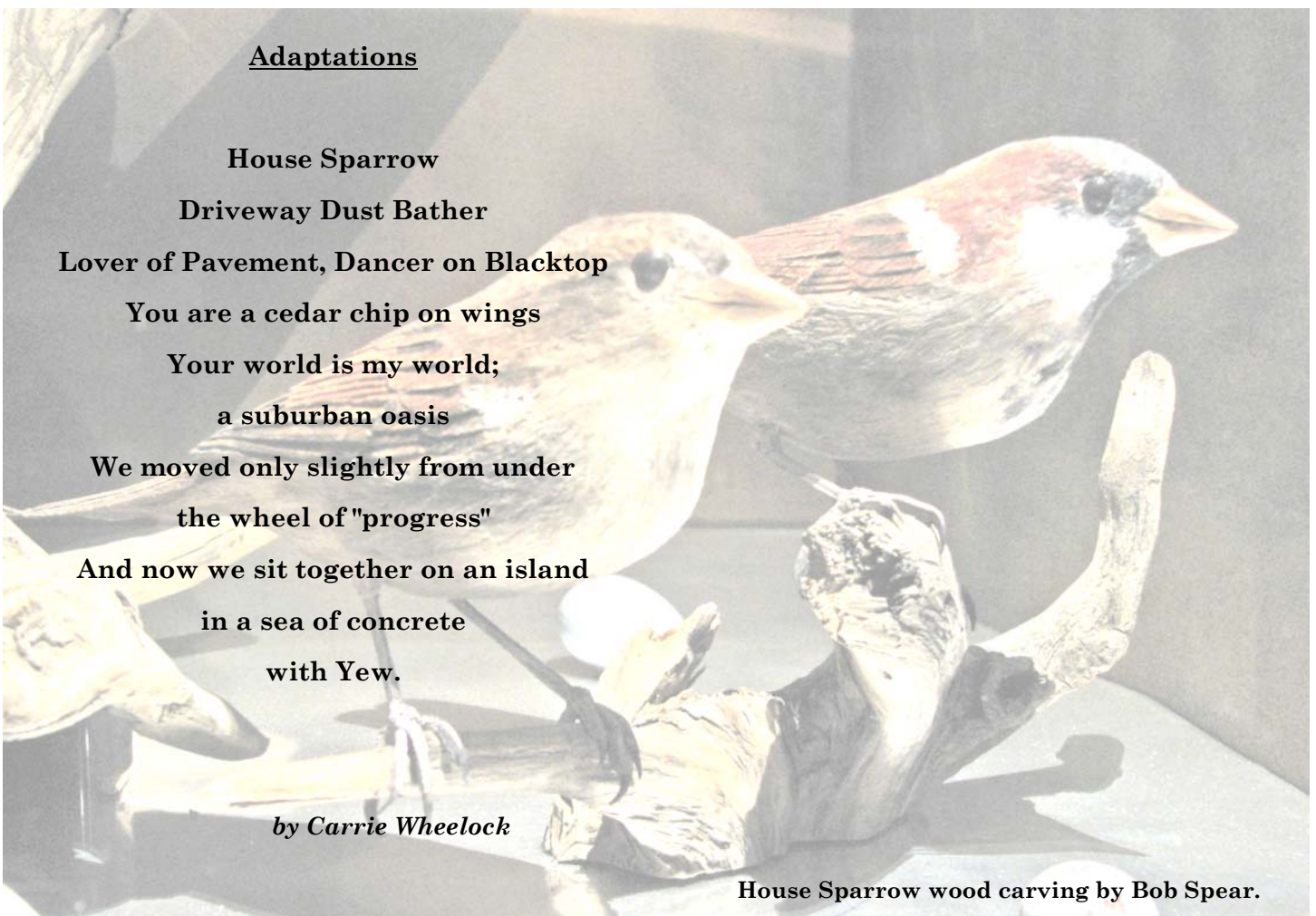
And now we sit together on an island

in a sea of concrete

with Yew.

by Carrie Wheelock

House Sparrow wood carving by Bob Spear.



MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS WORK MORE THAN 1000 HOURS IN 2006

Our volunteers play an important role in helping the Museum with its mission -- *to educate adults and children about the environment through the study of birds and their habitats.*

Our enthusiastic volunteers did an assortment of jobs. Many were docents, helping to educate the public about all birding matters while promoting the art of wood carving. In quieter moments volunteers worked on organizing the library, sorting out duplicate publications, organizing pictures and articles, creating bulletin boards, creating educational posters, assisting with bulk mailings, creating kids' activities, writing articles for the newsletter, conducting exit surveys, obtaining temperature and humidity measurements throughout the Museum, entering data, counting birds at the window, assisting with website activities, and helping with school groups.

Outdoors we found volunteers monitoring birds, maintaining trails, and repairing bridges. We also found volunteers *working hard* as they helped out with our most sedentary event – the Big Sit! Many also promoted the Museum at fairs and off-site events and we appreciate all of these efforts.

Our spring and fall events would not have been possible without the hard work of volunteers parking cars, selling food, leading walks, judging the art contest, greeting and talking with visitors, supervising kids' activities, entertaining the public with live music, and cleaning up and vacuuming when it was all over! We had 207 visitors at the Fall Event, and that does not include the 20 woodcarvers. Our big events were a success. Great job!

In 2006 our dedicated Board Members completed the strategic planning process. They also spent time working on myriad task forces to help the Museum continue to promote the study of birds, the art of wood carving, and Bob Spear's amazing vision.

The Museum has so many jobs for volunteers. It also has many wonderful people who love the Museum and Bob, and believe in his dream.

A big thank you to all who helped in 2006, and an invitation to new people to come see for yourselves how rewarding it is to promote birding, and the art of woodcarving!



Jean Arrowsmith, a Museum docent, and Bob Spear.

SAVE THESE DATES

- Feb 17** **Great Backyard Bird Count and Bob's Birthday**
2:00—4:00 p.m.
- Apr 23 –27** **Museum Open**
10:00—4:00 p.m.
- Apr 23 and 24** **Soap Carving**
10:00—2:00 p.m.
- May 05** **Volunteer Lunch and Work Party**
10:00—4:00

For additional information, or to register, please call 434-2167 or check out our website www.birdsofvermont.org.

The mission of the Birds of Vermont Museum is to educate children and adults about the environment through the study of birds and their habitats.

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Museum Staff

Ingrid Brown, Curator
Bob Spear, Founding Director
Erin Talmage, Museum Director

Thanks to Northeast Delta Dental for supporting our newsletter.



Northeast Delta Dental

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