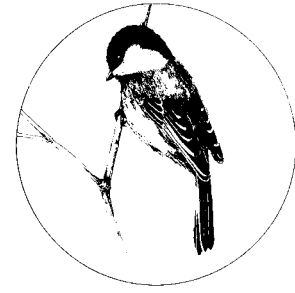


CHIP NOTES

The Newsletter of
The Birds of Vermont Museum



Volume 22

Our Twenty-second Year

January 2008

HELP BOB CELEBRATE 88 YEARS WITH CAKE, ICE CREAM, AND BIRDS.

Bob Spear, the Founding Director of the Birds of Vermont Museum, will celebrate his 88th birthday on February 21st. Everyone is invited to visit the Museum on **Saturday, February 16th**, to wish Bob Happy Birthday, and participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count. We will be serving cake at 2:00.

The Great Backyard Bird Count, in its 11th year, is a citizen science project led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. The count goes from February 15 - 18 and anyone can participate from their own home or a nearby park. We plan on counting at the Museum on February 16th. For those interested in counting we will show you how easy and fun it is, and we will get you started counting birds in your own backyard. 2007 was a record breaking year with Great Backyard participants, throughout North America and Canada, sending in over 81,000 checklists, counting over 100 million birds, and recording over 600 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. Trends and information have been learned about the abundance and distribution of birds, patterns of migration, and impacts of disease on certain birds. For more information, to download material, to take a bird quiz, to enter a photo in their contest, or to 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 16th to observe different species of birds. Come learn about backyard birds, practice identification skills, learn about other citizen science projects, and visit with Bob Spear, Master Carver, for his 88th birthday celebration.

Admission to the Museum is **free** all day!



Bob Spear carving Blackburnian Warblers in the early 1960's.

Those wishing to honor Bob's birthday are encouraged to make an \$88 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!



Bob Spear carving a Wild Turkey in early 2008.

ALWAYS IN OUR THOUGHTS

Every year some of our members pass on, and that is always sad. We can't mention all of them, but here are some who made a significant difference to the Museum.

Jane Handy

Many of you will remember Jane Handy as an active and energetic volunteer from the early days of the Museum. Jane and her husband, Jack, were charter members of the Museum, and Jane served on the Board of Trustees until 1994. She was knowledgeable and capable, and was the volunteer coordinator for many years. She was well-liked and made many friends among volunteers and Museum members. Jane and Jack built and planted the rock garden behind the feeder area, next to the cedar hedge. Jane also painted a small table with birds, situated near the Gift Shop, a beautiful job and admired by all who visit. Jane loved the Museum and left her footprint, and we will miss her dearly.

Bill Simmons

Bill served on the Board of Trustees from 1996 until 2001, and did a great job helping lead the Museum in new directions. He was an enthusiastic and talented woodcarver, a long-time member of the Green Mountain Wood Carvers, who gave classes at the Museum to dozens of kids and adults. His students will remember him with fondness as a kind and patient teacher. Every student gained in many ways from the experience. We all admire Bill for his mastery of carving, his love of his family, and his values. He touched everyone he met. Visitors to the Museum can still see him on our introductory video, praising the Museum and Bob's carvings. Bill will be missed by all.

Ernest Carlson

Ernie Carlson met Bob Spear when they both worked at General Electric. After working there for 38 years Ernie retired, and then he and his wife, Fern, traveled the world. This included working at 19 archaeological digs, and visits to Belize, Antarctica, and several South Pacific Islands. Ernie and Fern are long-time members of the Museum, and continue their support by asking friends to make donations in memory of Ernie. Such is their commitment to Bob and his vision.

Members support the Museum in many ways, the most touching being in donations in lieu of flowers when passed away. Many have made arrangements to remember the Museum in bequests, and we are very appreciative of the donations, which help us to further our mission of education about the environment in general, and about birds in particular. Thank you to all.



Jane and Jack Handy planted this rock garden.

THANK YOU MUSEUM MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

As we look back over the year, and think about all that has happened at the Museum, we can't help but be grateful to many people. We would like to extend a big thank you to all who helped to promote birding and the art of wood carving in 2007. Visitors, our members, and especially volunteers, love the Museum and Bob, and believe in his dream.

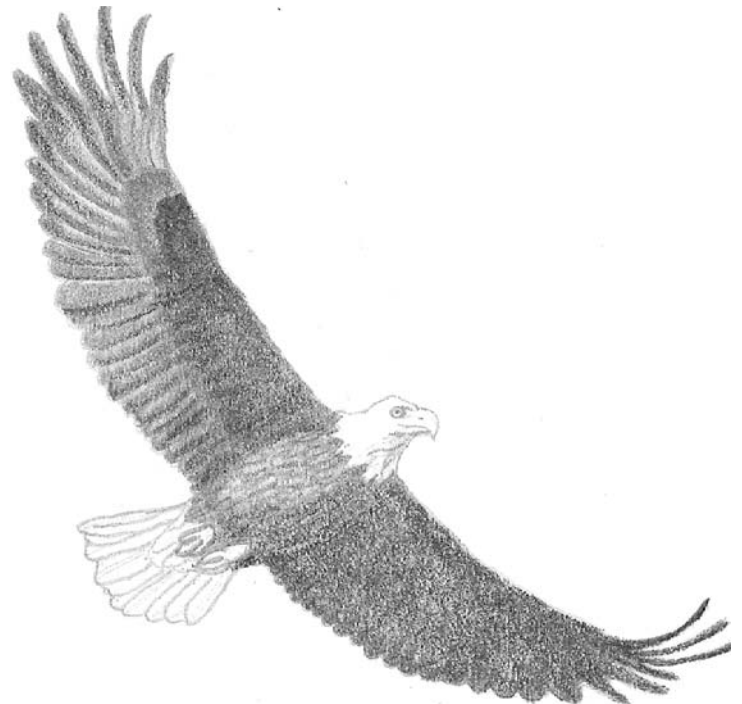
There are many ways to support the dream.

- Financially: with memberships and donations directly to the Museum, or by sponsoring events or booths, such as David Sunshine's sponsorship of our booth at the Christmas Fair in Richmond, and the support from Northfield Savings Bank for the Fall Festival. Delta Dental supports our newsletter. The Big Sit is another opportunity to raise money, while being sedentary. Thank you participants. Some of you have donated to specific wish lists, like Marty Hansen, who gave money for a banner for whenever we have an off-site booth. Thank you to many donors from previous wish lists.
 - Time: 50 volunteers donated over 1000 hours, by working inside the Museum as well as outdoors. Many hours were accumulated at our two large Annual Festivals. We are very appreciative to Bruce Blackman who continues to maintain our website.
 - Donations of goods: people brought lots of stuff to our first Garage Sale, which paid for some of our activities that day. Due to the success of this great fundraiser, it will become an annual activity. A few people have given bags of bird seed for our feathered friends, an always welcome gift! Lots of happy eaters in cold weather.
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CHITTENDEN COUNTY BIRD GUIDE

In the spring of 2008, Green Mountain Audubon Society plans to publish a guide to birding locations in Chittenden County. A committee of several members of the chapter are pooling information about their favorite birding areas. They are writing a description of the trails, directions to the site, expected birds to be seen, web-sites, and other information. Some of the sites described include Mt. Philo, Winooski Natural Area, Colchester Pond, Mud Pond in Williston, Woodside Natural Area, Salmon Hole, Green Mountain Audubon Center, and many more.

The Birds of Vermont Museum is collaborating in this project and Erin Talmage will write an article about the Museum and its trails. Ingrid Brown will provide artwork to illustrate the guide and has done many beautiful pencil drawings.



Ingrid Brown's illustration of a bald eagle that may be used in Green Mountain Audubon's Chittenden County Birding Guide.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Winter Bird Feeding and the Great Backyard Bird Count Slide Show

Dates/Meeting Places:

Wednesday, January 30th at Williston's Dorothy Alling Memorial Library

Thursday, January 31st at Bristol's Lawrence Memorial Library

Wednesday, February 6th at the Richmond Free Library

Thursday, February 7th at the Thatcher Brook Primary School in Waterbury



Time: 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm

Appropriate for: adults

Fee: Donations are greatly appreciated

The Green Mountain Audubon Center and the Birds of Vermont Museum (BOVM) have teamed up again, this time to get you ready to feed and identify winter birds in your yard! We will also get you all of the information you need to participate in this year's Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). We'll be sure to dazzle you with beautiful bird photos, examples of bird food and feeders, and you will take home a full color bird poster. As a bonus, all participants will receive a coupon for discounted bird feeding supplies at Guy's Farm and Yard in Williston.

Great Backyard Bird Count and Bob Spear's Birthday Celebration

Date/Meeting Place:

Saturday, February 16th at the Birds of Vermont Museum

Time: 10:00 - 4:00

Appropriate for: everyone

Fee: Free (but donations are greatly appreciated)

Winter Birds of the Lake Champlain Basin

Date/Meeting Place:

February 2, at the Vergennes Green (we will carpool from there)

Time: 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Appropriate for: adults and older children

Fee: \$25.00 for non-members, \$20.00 for members

Join Jim Andrews, herpetologist and long-time Champlain Valley birder, as we take a driving tour through the Champlain Basin and to the shores of Lake Champlain to spot some winter birds. We will carpool and stop at selected sites.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Wildlife Tracking and Slide Show with Sue Morse of Keeping Track (rescheduled due to the December Nor'easter)

Slide Show with Sue Morse of Keeping Track

Date/Meeting Place:

February 14th at the Birds of Vermont Museum

Time: 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Appropriate for: adults and older children

Fee: Program is \$50 for both days, or \$10 for the slide show only. Registration is necessary as space is limited.

Join nationally recognized naturalist and habitat specialist Sue Morse, the founder of Keeping Track, for a slide show of her excellent photographs on Vermont Wildlife.

Outdoor Field Trip with Sue Morse of Keeping Track

Date/Meeting Place:

February 17th at the Wolf Run in Jericho (We will meet at Richmond Park and Ride and carpool from there).

Time: 10:30 am - 3:00 pm

Appropriate for: adults and older children

Fee: Program is \$50 for both days and \$10 for the slide show only. Registration is necessary as space is limited.

As we walk, Sue will discuss the biology, ecology, and tracking lore for species whose tracks and sign are relatively abundant here in northern Vermont. Species may include: ruffed grouse, moose, black bear, bobcat, fisher, river otter, mink, beaver, coyote, and red fox. We will spend the entire time outside; more information will be provided at the slide show.

Owl Prowl

TBA

Volunteer Lunch/Work Party

May 3, 2008

Time: 9:00 - 3:00

Appropriate for: everyone interested in volunteering at the Museum

Help the Museum prepare for the season by cleaning trails, painting, and getting ready for International Migratory Bird Day. Lunch will be served at noon.

International Migratory Bird Day

May 17, 2008



A Volunteer helps two children with a craft at International Migratory Bird Day.

WILD TURKEY UPDATE

Bob's Tom Turkey in full display is nearing completion. The tail feathers are yet to be painted and burned, but all the carving is done. Bob is now applying the iridescence over the painted body. This Turkey project has taken Bob 984 hours, with over 1000 hours projected for finishing the bird and its setup in the case.

According to Bob, "It's hard to guess how long a project like this will take. We haven't done anything like this before. I hope the turkey isn't a year older before I'm a year older!"



A close up of the detail work involved in the creation of the Wild Turkey.

THE MUSEUM AWARDS HONOR ROLL STUDENTS

Along with many other local businesses the Museum has joined the Mount Mansfield Honor Roll Reward Program. Any honor roll student can receive a day pass to the Museum valid for the entire 2008 season.

BIRD FEEDER HIGHLIGHTS

The Museum's bird feeder area is always a great place to relax or to have lunch. All winter we continue to feed birds and the activity continues. A typical winter day might include Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers, White-breasted Nuthatches, Mourning Doves, and of course many many Black-capped Chickadees. Sometimes (see article on next page) we are visited by winter irruptives. Other times we are just plain surprised by what we see. For example, five Ruffed Grouse sitting in the crabapples in late November always make us pause by the window for a long look.



This winter has been a banner winter for seeing Barred Owls. Sightings during Christmas Bird Counts in Vermont were higher than normal, and many sightings have been reported on the Vermont Bird List Serv. We were also visited by a Barred Owl in late December. The Owl flew to a sunny spot (hard to find this past December) and remained in full view of our office windows for over four hours! Lately, we have had more suitable guests to our feeding area, five Wild Turkeys. So far they have all been females, and we think they must be interested in Bob's male Turkey in the workshop...

For more information on feeding your own backyard birds please attend one of our bird feeding workshops, or participate in the Great Backyard Bird Count.

WINTER BIRDING

I first noticed the flock of Common Redpolls at my feeders in Huntington, VT on December 3, 2007. They have been consistently showing up every day, or every few days since then. Perhaps I am easily amused but I am pleased each time I see them.

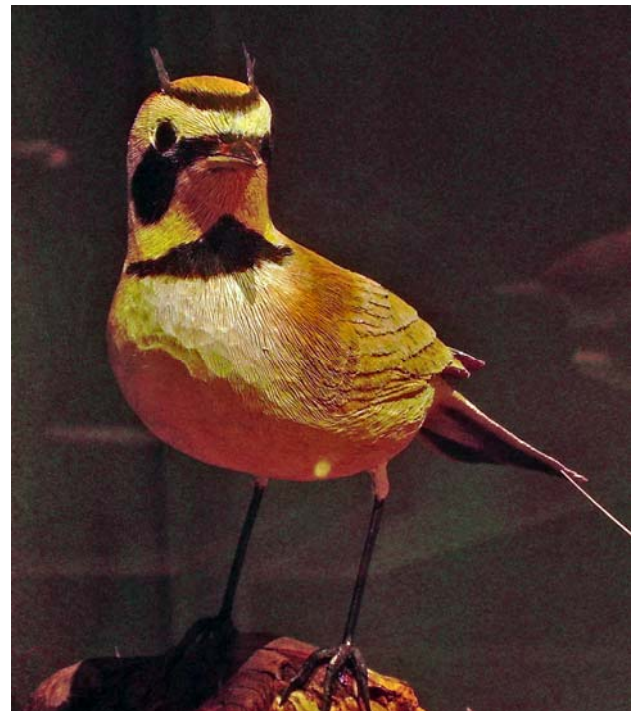
Some birds show up regularly at our feeders in spring and fall as part of their typical migratory pattern. Winter irruptive bird species, such as Redpolls, are less predictable but often some of the highlights of winter birding. Irruptive species are birds that normally feed in the northern boreal forests and the list often includes: the Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged crossbill, and Red-breasted Nuthatch. Here in Vermont some of those birds are found year round so they don't top the list as exciting winter birds but farther south they might. In Vermont, and surrounding areas, this has been the winter to see Pine Grosbeaks. Pine Grosbeaks are slightly larger than Evening Grosbeaks and the males look like they have been dipped in a rosy – colored paint. Pine Grosbeaks are more often seen in large flocks on fruit bearing trees in busy urban areas, college campuses, or backyards..

Dramatic irruptions are being tracked and studied in a variety of ways. Scientists can use data collected during Christmas Bird Counts, Project Feederwatch, and the Great Backyard Bird Count . The reasons for the irruptions are under some debate; although a change in food quantities is often cited as the reason to move. The fruiting of certain boreal trees: spruce, fir, tamarack, and birch, appears to be synchronized. So one year there will be abundance of seeds and the next almost none. In 2007, seed crops in much of Ontario and western Quebec in most places were very poor.

The winter is a great time to see other birds that are usually only seen in the winter. These might include American Tree Sparrows, Northern Shrikes, Bohemian Waxwings, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspurs, and Horned Larks. Some years an abundance of Northern Owls are seen as their food sources dwindle in their northern territories. A lucky winter birder might catch a glimpse of a Great Gray Owl, a Snowy Owl or even a Northern Hawk Owl.

If you are interested in seeing winter birds join us on our field trip on February 2, or on one of our other programs focused on winter birds.

E.T.



Horned Lark carving (above). Photograph by Kiera Kirkaldy.

Common Redpoll carving (left photograph).

SAVE THESE DATES

Slide Show, Feeding Winter Birds

- Jan 30** Williston Library, 6:30 p.m.
Jan 31 Bristol Library, 6:30 p.m.
Feb 6 Richmond Library, 6:30 p.m.
Feb 7 Thatcher Brook Primary School, 6:30 p.m.
- Feb 2** **Winter Birds of the Lake Champlain Basin**
call to register \$20
- Feb 16** **Great Backyard Bird Count/Bob Spear's
Birthday celebration**
- Feb 14** **Sue Morse Tracking Slide Show**
BOVM, call to register, \$10.
- Feb 17** **Sue Morse Tracking Field Trip**
Jericho, 10:30-3, call to register, \$50.

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

*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

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Bob Spear, Founding Director
Erin Talmage, Museum Director

Thanks to Northeast Delta Dental for supporting
our newsletter.

The logo for Delta Dental, featuring a stylized white triangle icon to the left of the text "DELTA DENTAL" in a bold, sans-serif font, all set against a black rectangular background.

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