

Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM

Volume 34

Late Fall 2020 – Early Winter 2021



BORDERS: ILLUSIONS THAT CONSTRAIN US

In the fall of 2019, the word *borders* was often in the news, usually in context of humans crossing from one country into another. From that evocative word our 2020 art show was born. Our call to artists asked creators, what is a border to a bird? What borders do birds encounter? How do birds' boundaries connect to and affect human boundaries?

This show brought together works from thirty-six artists, photographers, and poets. Their creativity depicted and suggested political boundaries, concrete walls, urban perimeters, pollution effects, weather patterns, and the stages of a bird's life. The art spoke in varied ways to the insubstantial borders between words and images, states of matter, urban and rural, human and bird comprehension, and even life and death.

Ironically, the number of people who came in-person to see the (unintentionally timely) *Borders* show dropped starkly as the borders around us—international, interstate—closed, opened, and closed again.

As we put together the show, we could never have predicted how borders of so many kinds would shift, change and influence all of 2020. State and county borders were highlighted, drawn, and closed. Political boundaries both affected and reflected human reactions to the pandemic. People were limited by new constraints in ways we could not have predicted, and allowed numbers in a facility dropped and rose and dropped. People who normally cross numerous borders for fun—to see family, to see birds—found themselves staying home. We all strove to erect barriers to a pandemic virus.

Yet, as humans across the world limited their movements, birds continued to journey across our human-drawn maps. During the timespan of this art show we said hello and good bye to Tanagers, Hummingbirds, Thrushes, and more as they twice traveled across states, countries, and for some birds, even a continental border, migrating to and from their wintering and breeding grounds.

As we cross now from fall to winter, it looks like we will get to welcome more birds that commonly pass by humans' edges. In the last month, Evening Grosbeaks, Snowy Owls, Bohemian Waxwings, and even Pine Grosbeaks have ventured from Canada into Vermont. Seeing winter irruptions gives us that spring-like spark of unexpected joy. These birds remind us it's okay, even healthy, for some borders to be permeable, to exist only as constructs of human imagination.



Above: a close-up of Marcia Vogler's *Invasion*, an artist book constructed of clear sheets printed with birds, spilling outward from an opaque cover.

Below: detail of Rebecca Rosenthal's *Bicknell's Thrush*, a mixed media fiber artwork.

More images from our 2020 art show can be found on the Museum's Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube pages.



A RACE AROUND BIRDS

This year, under the direction of member and long-time runner, Van Talmage, the Museum offered its first annual trail race. It was a “virtual” race, on our trails but at each runner’s own schedule during October, so we could keep participants safe despite the pandemic. The race course could be run (or walked) as one lap (about 5.8k) or two (11k). You could run more than once, on different days, to compete against yourself as well.

Congratulations to all entrants! The foliage was beautiful, the trails sometimes tricky, and overall a successful event.

The *Arctic Tern Award* went to **Jessica Dion** for the fastest double-route. She ran the race course twice in 1 hour 50 minutes.

The *Peregrine Falcon Award* went to **Scott Silverstein** for the fastest single lap. He ran it in 0:34 (34 minutes). This, if you didn’t know, is *wicked fast*.

The *Roadrunner Award* went to **Morgan Barnes** (who was also the youngest runner) for being the second fastest at 0:44.

Double Clutch Recognitions, for all runners who raced more than once but on separate days, went to **Laura Edling, Van Talmage, and Scott Silverstein**. Congratulations to Laura for cutting her race time by a whopping 5 minutes on her second go!

The *Hermit Thrush Award*, for the fastest walking time, had a three-way tie between **Katelyn and George Hudson and Allison Gergely**, all at 1:25.

The *Caching Championship*, for seeing the most number of bird species while on the trail, went to **Jim Morris and Pat Spielman**.

The *Golden Rake Award* was shared by **Rita Sloan and Van Talmage** for their incredible work marking the route and clearing all the trails multiple times.

We have scheduled next year's Race Around Birds for November 6th, 2021. Keep an eye on our website events page for the most current info.



#AskBob

Q: Do you have an example of making do in a pinch?

A: That’s the story of my life.

#AskBob is an collection of quips compiled in 1989 by John Johnson of the Burlington Free Press.



Carving Report

Jim Mitchell carved an award winning Snow Goose. This past September, he delivered it to the Museum where it is now part of the permanent collection. It has joined a flock of fellow geese (painted by Libby Davison) in the Fall Wetland diorama.

David Tuttle taught woodcarving classes again this year, even though we had to minimize the class sizes and reschedule numerous times due to the pandemic. We appreciate the flexibility of both Dave and all the students, as well Dave’s donation of a *Largemouth Bass* carving to our Spring Wetland diorama. Some of his small, whimsical carvings are now for sale in our gift shop.

Green Mountain Wood Carvers held an outdoor carve-in this October in our treehouse. We hope to see them again next year.

We all miss **Wood Taylor**, and continue to send **Barbara** and family our best wishes (see page 6).



THE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

Part 20: My Father and The Great Western Adventure. And Lollipops.

My father loved Vermont to his core, but he also ventured far from home on occasion to gather up some birds for his life list. When I was about four years old, he and my mother and I headed out for a destination very far away from Vermont—California.

But we didn't just pack up and go—we had to buy a new car first. They chose a huge white station wagon, a big boat of a car with a roof rack for the stuff that wouldn't fit inside. I remember an interminable wait at a bank to arrange the financing, and an endless supply of lollipops the nice lady behind the desk kept giving me. For once in my life, my parents didn't say that I'd had enough, so I got to eat lollipops for HOURS while they signed forms. To this day, when I'm buying a new car, I think of the crinkle of plastic wrappers and fruit flavors and how fun it is the chew the slippery stick after the candy is gone.

A few days later, we loaded up the new white station wagon. And loaded, and loaded. We had all kinds of cool new stuff, like a big green cooler, and water jugs, and I had my very own sleeping bag—silver on the outside, and fuzzy red on the inside. And of course we packed our new tent—orange and blue and big enough for us all to stand up inside—and my father's binoculars and camera gear and spotting scope and...and...and... the station wagon got fuller and fuller, right up to the back of the front seat. I had been told I'd have the back seat to myself, but I

realized pretty quickly that that wasn't going to happen. Instead, I ended up with a crevice to myself—a narrow little cave in the middle of stacked stuff. And I thought it was awesome. No one else could fit back there—it was all mine. I could hardly move, but there were plenty of nooks and crannies to stick my stuffed animals in around me.

The morning we left, I was ready to go off on The Great Western Adventure. Except I had NO idea how far away California was. When I found out we weren't going to be there by lunch time, or even dinner time, and that a whole lot of lunches and dinners would go by before we got there (and of course, a whole lot of birds) I was pretty disillusioned. But my mother had a lollipop all ready for me, so all was well.

Our course was plotted from national park to national park, and cities were something my father drove through as quickly as he could. They meant loud trucks and smelly exhaust and tall buildings looming over the road. I had no idea kids grew up not being able to walk on grass and sit under trees unless they went to a park. I still have trouble imagining it.

But the campgrounds my parents chose were peaceful and quiet and fun to explore, and we stayed in a different

... continued on page 5

Thank you : Volunteers Behind the Scenes

- » Jim Morris and Reggie Pouliot: sanding and refinishing the railing of Gale's Crossing
- » Brian Werneke : donating lumber for the retreat
- » David Sunshine : working with a legacy
- » Magnus Stien : helping repair equipment and working on grounds
- » Dick Affolter and Lauren Bostwick : welcoming visitors and tending the gift shop
- » Jim Mitchell : wood carving for exhibit
- » Michelle Patenaude and Meg Pratt : birding and eBird data entry
- » Charlie Frazier, Erny and Darlene Palola, and Allison Gergely : trail cams for wildlife and security
- » Bill and Mae Mayville: disinfectant wipes and hand sanitizer

- » Rita Sloan: gardening and trail work
- » Erny Palola : trail work
- » Van Talmage : race director
- » Dwight Cargill: donation of prints
- » Dave Tuttle: carving and teaching
- » Spencer Hardy: leading a nature walk
- » Family and friends of Wood Taylor
- » John Gergely and Steve Smith: clearing trees off trails
- » Mark Paul: donation of bird photographs
- » Jim Osborn and all the Big Sitters
- » Allyson Rigutto, Allie Kratzat, and Kevin Contino : Trail work

ONLINE, & LEARNING

This fall and winter, we are exploring ways to offer more online connections. From presentations to AMA (ask-me-anything) sessions, we're trying new things.

In November, we partnered with the Milton Public Library. Erin Talmage presented our *Winter Bird Feeding* program using Zoom virtual meetings. Over two dozen people attended, sending questions through the chat tool or ahead of time by email. The session was recorded and may be online with the library soon.

Also in November, the Museum hosted Vermont Symphony Orchestra's filming of the fifth session of their Musical Chairs series. Videos of these sessions are available at <https://www.youtube.com/user/VermontSymphony> — each session has been recorded at a different place around Vermont, and focuses on different elements of an orchestra.

In December, the Museum, Audubon Vermont, and the Vermont Reptile and Amphibian Atlas offered two one-hour *Ask a Naturalist* virtual chats. Will that be enough time to answer all your questions?

We are working to develop more programs over the winter; our website events page will list them. Let us know what makes you curious! And what tech tools work for you? A Twitch stream of behind the scenes work? GoPro video, posted to YouTube, of us going

birding in the winter? Snap shots from our trail cams? Coffee chats over zoom with fellow birders? Webinars? We're fledglings at this, and excited to grow our skills.

And while you're online, check out our other newest web project: bringing some of our in-person gift shop online at <https://birdsofvermont.org/gift-shop/>. Order online, and we'll schedule a "curbside pickup" with you. Shipping's a little logistically harder but we hope to be able to offer that in the future too.

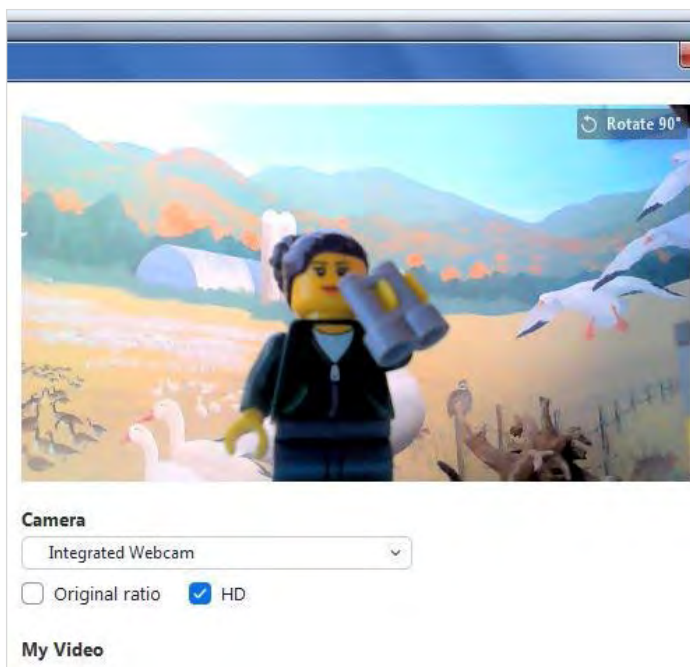


Raffle Winner!

Congratulations to members **Peter and Jo Ellen Swaine** who won the framed *Northern Reflections—Loon Family* print.

And we also send many, many more thanks to everyone who entered! We had entries from all over New England, plus New Jersey. It was an important fundraiser this year!

Next year's raffle item is ready to go! We'll tell you more about it next issue.



The Carver's Daughter continued from page 3

one almost every night. I loved to watch my father take our tent out of a little bag and turn it into a home. It was held up by a metal framework that looked like a big spider. He put that up first and then hung the tent underneath it. It had an awning that stretched out front, and windows that zipped open. My sleeping bag and my stuffed animals liked it, too.

My father had an idea that he would pose me sitting in front of the sign at the entrance of every national park we visited. This wasn't bad, except my father didn't just snap a quick picture. He had me first face one way and then another, and he walked around me to get the perfect angle and light. This often meant that we collected a crowd of strangers saying how cute I was, while my mother hovered behind my father, holding up a lollipop in return for one more smile. After the trip, my father put together a slide show of our adventures, and I'm pretty sure there is a photo of me in front of every national park between Vermont and California. In each one, I'm looking longingly at something just over my father's shoulder.

And we did have adventures. I remember hiking through endless canyons and across open deserts, seeing cactuses that were taller than trees (I called them "big bitey things") and mountains that had snow even in late spring. We saw a place where hot water shot up from the ground into the air, and we saw some trees that had turned into rocks. I remember a thunderstorm with hail stones the size of quarters and how we had to run into the tent for cover, leaving our dinner on the picnic table. When it was over, I picked ice out of my bowl of stew. I remember Gray Jays coming to my hand to eat pieces of cereal. I remember falling to sleep listening to coyotes howling.

Once I ran across some rocks where my father told me not to run, and I fell and cut my knee. There was a lot of blood, and I felt kind of dizzy and sick. My parents sat me on the open tailgate of the station wagon and opened the first aid kit and debated something about going to a hospital and stitches, which sounded very scary to me. But they decided a Band-Aid and a lollipop would be okay. I still have a triangular scar on my left knee from what we renamed "Boo-boo Rock National Park."

One night when we were camped near the Salton Sea, my father and the station wagon left at dusk to go look



I remember my father telling me to "lean forward and look like you're looking at the old boat." I understand now that he was getting the perfect composition for the photo, with the curve of my back completing the curve of the old boat. But all I cared

for owls. My mother and I went to bed after it got dark, and soon a windstorm hit. I woke up to a terrifying banging and loud snapping sounds as the tent threatened to take flight from its anchoring frame. The outside awning had come loose, and its poles were slamming into the tent. Fortunately, a man from a camper next door came and helped my mother secure the awning. When my father returned, my mother and I were snug and safe inside the camper having hot chocolate. My father was pretty alarmed to find the tent half blown over and us gone, but he joined us for hot chocolate too, and the next day he bought a set of heavy-duty stakes. And of course he'd seen the owl he wanted.

One campground had signs warning us to keep our food in the car at night because of bears. I wanted to see one, but my mother did not. However, on the first night we were there, after I'd gone to bed, she walked alone to the bathrooms. She came back in a hurry, so upset she woke me up. There'd been a bear going through the garbage can outside the bathroom door. It had picked up its head and looked at my mother. For some strange reason, she had a lollipop in her pocket, and she was terrified that the bear would smell food on her. So she flung the lollipop at it and then hurriedly made her way back to the tent. In the morning, my father retrieved the lollipop from the ground and brought it back to me. I remember

... continued on page 7

WINTER WITH US

BIRD MONITORING WALKS

Saturdays, December 26, January 30, February 27, March 27 • 8:00 – 9:30am

We hope to be able to host bird walks this winter, as usual. Call to sign up, and please check our website for updates, birdsofvermont.org/events

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Friday-Monday, February 12–15, 2021

Community science, open to all, and help everywhere. We hope to open for one of the days, and you can join in from home. See <https://www.birdcount.org/> for details.

CARVING CLASS

February 20, 2021, the class will be carving "Dave's surprise." (Teacher Dave Tuttle will choose ; we know it'll be fun.) Stay tuned for enrollment limits and options.

LOOKING FORWARD

March • **Deadline** for our 2021 Art Show, the Call to Artists will be emailed and posted on our website.

April • **Volunteer Work Day**

May • **Open for the 2021 Season**
Early Birders Morning Walks

WOOD TAYLOR



Green Mountain Wood Carver, and friend, Richard "Wood" Taylor passed away last summer. He made relief carvings, turned wood, built furniture, and carved in the round. He described his work as "did a little bit of everything."

We miss seeing his smile and hearing his jokes during the GMWC carve-ins. We remember him fondly.



LEADERSHIP CHAMPLAIN

Leadership Champlain is a year-long professional development program coordinated by the Lake Champlain Chamber of Commerce. Participants attend workshops, discussions and community tours. In addition, each group chooses a service project from those submitted by local non-profits.

The Birds of Vermont Museum was grateful to be chosen as a recipient. This year's team of young professionals worked on a Digital Communications and Marketing Analysis for the Museum. The group said they were slowed down by the pandemic, but that was not noticeable to us, as their work was complete and timely. This fall they presented to us (over Zoom) an impressive plan complete with attainable action items and excellent community contacts. We thank them!

If you are interested in learning more about Leadership Champlain, visit www.vermont.org/chamber/.



Leadership Champlain team members presenting to Museum staff, from left-to-right/top-to-bottom: Ashley Sniatecki, Al Belluche, Kir Talmage, Allison Gergely, Mike Steding, Erin Talmage, Carolyn Felix, Alison DeFisher, and Sasha Vaut.

The Carver's Daughter continued from page 5

it was cherry and tasted very good despite its adventure.

Finally, we reached Los Angeles, where my aunt and uncle lived in a house under palm trees. The best part of being there was that my uncle would lift me into the air every morning and let me pick my very own orange from the tree that grew in their yard and eat it for breakfast. We also saw Mickey Mouse at Disneyland.

And then, at last, we turned the station wagon toward home after The Great Western Adventure was over.

Wait, you mean it's going to take just as long to drive home?????

Oh, wow, TWO lollipops at once!

— Kari Jo Spear 

Kari Jo Spear, daughter of Bob Spear, is a writer of young adult novels and more. Her newest book, *The Carver's Daughter: A Memoir* is available in print and as an eBook from all major on-line booksellers. You can also find it at Phoenix Books in Burlington and Essex, Vermont, and of course in the gift shop at the Birds of Vermont Museum—now in-person and online.


Kari Jo is on the web at <https://carversdaughter.blogspot.com/>. You can also follow her on Facebook as Carver's Daughter <https://www.facebook.com/Carvers-Daughter-105285684579200>.

THE MUSEUM'S OWN LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

Built of an upcycled Wood Duck nesting box, the Birds of Vermont Museum's Little Free Library (LFL) is open to the public. It is easy to get to: on a shed wall near the entrance path to the Museum. In keeping with a nesting motif (that is, slightly hidden), and wishing to keep some of the weather off, volunteer Erny Palola, attached our LFL under the shed's eaves. Erny also did the remodeling of the box, adding a door and a shelf for smaller books. The clear window gives a sneak peek at what's inside.

Little Free Libraries are pop-up boxes (in an endless variety of styles) that contain books you can borrow. You may return them to any Little Free Library, or keep them, all without a library card. LFLs are not meant to replace regular libraries nor bookstores, but to inspire us as all to read a little more, wherever we go, and to share interesting books.

Our LFL is also a Bookcrossing zone, so you can share and track books via bookcrossing.com. Bookcrossers register books in their collection, sometime release them, and can look up a registered book to discover where else that book has been.

Come by the Museum and borrow a book! We started with some bird guides, but those were swapped for some mysteries, and now there's a varied, changing collection (including puzzles)... come see and swap for yourself. 



#AskBob

Q: What would you do, if you couldn't do what you are doing now?

A: Read more, especially history.



Birds of Vermont Museum

900 Sherman Hollow Road
Huntington, Vermont 05462
www.birdsofvermont.org

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG
POSTAGE **PAID**
Richmond, VT 05477
Permit 53

SAVE THE DATES

December 1 and 10	Ask-a-Naturalist
February 12–15	Great Backyard Bird Count
February 20	Carving Class
March 16	Art Show Deadline
April TBD	Volunteer Work Day

Last Saturdays Bird Monitoring Walks

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

#AskBob

Q: What do you do when you feel sorry
for yourself?

A: Carve; it's very therapeutic.

Board of Trustees 2020

William Mayville, President
Shirley Johnson, Secretary
Brian Werneke, Treasurer

Becky Cozzens	Mae Mayville	Kari Jo Spear
James Osborn	Ginger Lubkowitz	David Sunshine
Elizabeth Spinney	Zac Cota-Weaver	Spencer Hardy

Museum Staff

Erin Talmage, Executive Director
Allison Gergely, Museum Educator
Kir Talmage, Outreach & IT Coordinator

Please send comments or changes of address to

Birds of Vermont Museum
900 Sherman Hollow Road • Huntington, VT 05462
museum@birdsofvermont.org • (802) 434-2167

*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.*