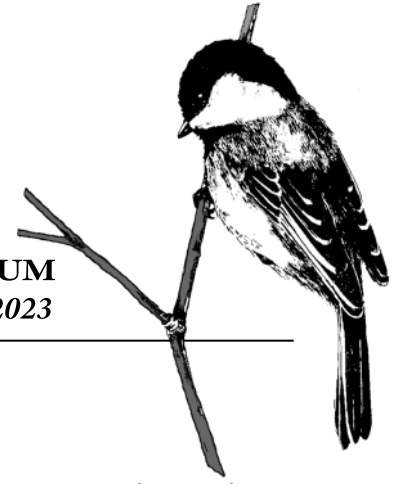


Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM
Volume 37

Summer 2023



GALE'S RETREAT OPENS FOR GUESTS

In the 1980s Bob Spear built Gale Lawrence a cabin in the woods behind her house. This cabin was designed to provide Gale with a place “away from the world”. It became a place where she could find solitude and experience the nature around her, a place for contemplation, and a place for her to write.

In 2016, Gale officially donated the parcel of land that included this cabin to the Birds of Vermont Museum. At that point, we were able to more than double the trails available to the public. Soon after, we started working to fix up the cabin with the goal of creating a space where guests can have a place to write or draw, listen to birds, and step away from the busy world.

The Birds of Vermont Museum has partnered with Vermont Huts to make this dream a reality. As of August 11, 2023, Gale's Retreat can be rented for overnight stays. The cabin is rustic. There is no electricity nor running water. There is a privy for a bathroom. It is ideal for anyone hiking, bird watching, snow shoeing, trail running, nature journaling, and quiet reflecting. The cabin is located within a deciduous/coniferous forest with a stream nearby, a haven in the Vermont forest.

It has taken a few years to reach this point. The list of

people to thank is long. The Museum's Board was instrumental in getting this project going—and keeping it going. Thank you, Bill and Mae Mayville, Shirley Johnson, Zac Cota-Weaver (and Charles), Becky Cozzens, Ginger Lubkowitz, Jim Osborn, Kari Jo Spear, Spencer Hardy (and Jacqueline), Elizabeth Spinney, and David Sunshine.

Many volunteers did everything from planning to washing the windows. These include RJ Thompson, Dick Affolter, Debbie Duvall, Megan Pratt, John Gergely, Erny and Darlene Palola, Ryan Elliott, Rita Sloan, Ron Brosius, Pat Spielman-Morris, Steve Smith, and members of the Dismas House.

Extra special thanks go to Jim Morris, Dave Cozzens, Magnus Stien, and board member Brian Werneke, who each put in more than 50 hours working on improving the cabin and building the privy.

Reserve a stay using the Vermont Huts website at <https://vermonthuts.org/huts/gales-retreat/>. All current members of the Birds of Vermont Museum get a 15% discount for their stay. Please call or email the Museum for the coupon code before making your reservation.

We look forward to welcoming you.



The retreat welcomes guests with a small table, a cushioned bench, a new deck, and a lovely view.

We've been lucky enough to work with six interns this year so far. Four have completed their internships as of this writing; we've included some of them in this issue and the rest (Molly, Eva and Francesca) will be in the next. We thank them all. We are very grateful for their hard and creative work!

MICHAEL UGWE & ACCESSIBILITY PRACTICES



Michael Ugwe, a sophomore from Kenya studying Computer Science and Math at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania, is passionate about art and does digital painting, mixed media art, and design. His interest in design is primarily on accessibility: that is, making sure all design is indeed accessible to everyone.

The museum offered Ugwe a 20-hour micro-internship last January through an alumni connections program. This project began with our aging signage: each bird species shown in the museum has an informational sign/label, created 20-25 years ago. Best practices for accessibility have improved. Ugwe drafted new standards for accessible signage, specifically for the birds in the exhibits. He researched font faces, text block design, contrast, color and whitespace recommendations, readability standards, standardized symbols, etc. He summarized this in a best-practices document for the museum to use. He also drafted a possible template for a typical new label or sign.

Ugwe writes, "I am more than happy to say that I had a wonderful experience doing it. I had traveled back home over the winter break and doing this work at home really provided me with insight on what accessible design was, even as I interacted with my immediate environment back in Kenya. It made me realize that more accessible design is indeed needed in my country (and of course the rest of the world) and inspired me to do more in that regard."

"This was indeed more than helpful as an experience, and I would be happy to work with the museum once again in the future. I am also very happy and thankful for the membership and hope to be able to visit Vermont in the near future. Thank you once again for all your support and for giving me an opportunity to offer my services at the museum. I wish you a wonderful year ahead."

Ugwe looks forward to merging interests in CS and design to improve user experiences in contemporary technology and that of the future. In his free time, he likes painting, reading about world history, listening to music and occasionally dj-ing, and playing football (the real one).

— Michael Ugwe and the Birds of Vermont Museum 

GIANNI MAFFESENTI & COMMUNITY SCIENCE

Gianni Meffessanti was an intern from the Essex High School Internship program. His project entailed learning to make and share observations for community science.



Gianni seeking salamanders

Gianni writes, "Interning at the Birds of Vermont Museum was an awesome experience. I spent a lot of time exploring the trails and learning about the local wildlife. It was amazing to

discover how much diversity there is in just a small part of the woods.

"While exploring the woods, I was able to share the things I observed through iNaturalist. iNaturalist is a social network that allows for the sharing of observations and information. It really helped me to understand and share the things I was seeing. I also had the opportunity to write an article about a very interesting animal, the Eastern Newt. It was a great learning experience to research and write about the things that I was seeing in nature."

To see all the observations made by contributors around the Birds of Vermont Museum, visit <https://tinyurl.com/inat-bovm>. You can find Gianni's own 40-some observa-

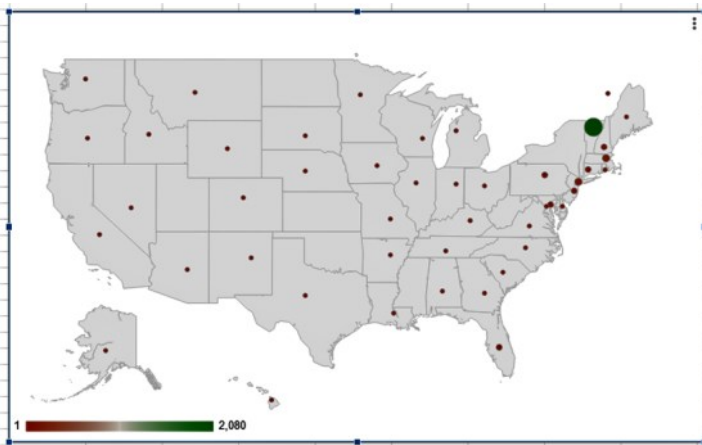
ORLANDO YAHIR AZUARA HERNANDEZ & VISITOR DATA



Orlando has just completed his third year at Swarthmore College with a major in Computer Science and a minor in French and Francophone Studies. He has a special interest in web development, data science, and machine learning, and

loves to find ways to use data to better understand the world around him.

Orlando introduced himself to us by writing, “Some projects I have worked on in the past include a study on the use of machine learning for optimal sleeping schedules and a web application to make science more accessible



Map of US Visitors in 2021

tions from near the museum at <https://tinyurl.com/inat-bovm-gm>. To see all of Gianni’s iNaturalist records, from here and elsewhere, visit <https://www.inaturalist.org/people/gm4444>. His article about the Eastern Newt is posted in our blog at <https://birdsofvermont.org/the-eastern-newt/>.



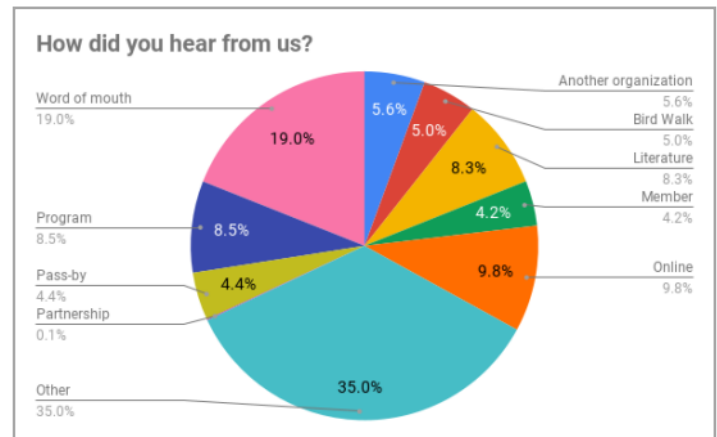
Eastern Newt, red eft form.

Photo by Gianni Maffessanti

for the general population. In my free time, I enjoy creating music and painting pastel landscapes.”

The Museum offered Orlando a 20-hour micro-internship last January through an alumni connections program. We asked Orland to create summaries of several years of visitor data from our logs and guest registers. We’ve been curious about where visitors come from, how they heard about the museum, and how many are repeat visitors. We encouraged Orlando to identify data gaps for us as well, so we can improve the usefulness of our data-gathering.

Orland provided us with both tabular and visual summaries. Two of his visual results are shown here. We hope to use this information as we encourage people to visit and revisit the museum. It should help us better focus our advertising efforts as well.



Pie charts, like this summary from 2019 data, can tell us what ways of communication connect people to the museum.

This project would not have been possible without the help of members Shirley Zundell and Jayne Sheridan, who assisted in transcribing several years of handwritten guest registers into spreadsheets.

— Orlando Azuara and the Birds of Vermont Museum 

#AskBob

Q: What is your favorite vice?

A: : Ice cream.

EVENTS

THANK YOU for THE HUT / RETREAT VOLUNTEERS

Friday, August 25 • by invitation

The Museum thanks the volunteers who have helped make the Retreat ready for sharing with the wider public via the Vermont Huts program.

BIRD MONITORING WALKS

Last Saturdays • August 26 @ 7:30 am, September 30 @ 8:00 am

Birders—current, experienced, newbie and would-be—welcome! Join our monthly monitoring walk outdoors on the Museum's trails in forest and meadow.

Outdoors • Donations welcome • *Please register*
Recommended for older children and adults

INTERNATIONAL VULTURE AWARENESS DAY

Saturday, September 2 • worldwide

How many vulture species live in Vermont (and where). Can you find all of our vulture carvings?

Celebrate wherever you are.



MEANDER FOR MUSHROOMS

Sunday, September 10 • 9:00 – 11:30 am

Explore the woods and learn about the mushrooms and other fungi, forest ecology, community science, and taking better mushroom photos.

Members: \$20 (\$30- \$40 for others) • *Pre-register* • Meg's book and cards are available in the gift shop.

FEATHER CARVING & PAINTING

Saturday, September 16 • 9:30am – 3pm

Create a wooden Blue Jay feather with Bob Lindemann. Not just woodcarving and painting; we will use a wood-burner (pyrography) to create fine details.

Pre-register
Max 8 participants
Members: \$35
(\$45 for others)



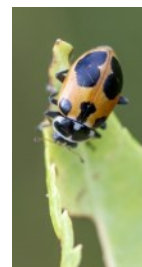
Scan this QR code to go to <https://birdsofvermont.org/special-upcoming/> and sign up for events.

LADY BEETLES with JULIA PUPKO

Sunday, September 17 • 11am

Join Julia Pupko from the Vermont Center for Ecostudies for a fun and informative talk about Lady Beetles in Vermont, conservation efforts, and community science.

Pre-register • Suggested donation: \$10-\$15



DEAD CREEK WILDLIFE FESTIVAL

Saturday, October 7 • Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, Addison, Vermont

Come to the WMA with the Museum and others for a great day of walks, talks, soap and decoy carving, bird calls, and more. Great for all ages.

Details usually posted at vtfishandwildlife.com/

THE BIG SIT

Sunday, October 8 • Dawn to Dusk

The most relaxed birding around and around and around... How many birds can we identify from a 17-foot diameter circle from sunrise to sunset?

Pledges and donations welcome
Call museum about participating

TREE ID for BIRDERS and FRIENDS

Sunday, October 8 • 9am – 3pm

Have you ever noticed a bird, then wondered what kind of tree it was in, or why it was there? Take a walk and explore forest habitats with birder and forester Kathleen Stutzman,

Max: 12 people
Suggested donation \$10 – \$15 • *Registration required.*

RACE AROUND BIRDS

Saturday, November 4 • Race starts at 10

Run or walk the fourth annual Race Around Birds trail run! Choose to race on Race Day (November 4), or participate in the self-timed virtual races October 21-November 3.

Pre-register

Please check our website for updates or additions
<https://www.birdsofvermont.org/events>
Advance registration required for most events.

To register, visit
<https://www.birdsofvermont.org/special-upcoming/>
then click or tap on the event name, or call (802) 434-2167

THE CARVER'S DAUGHTER :

Part 25: My Father and the Canyon

My life list has always been a connection between my father and me, ever since my twelfth birthday when he gave me my first binoculars and a field guide where I could check off the birds I'd seen on the list in the back. Just over a year ago, I reached the landmark number of 314 birds, which is what his list was when I started mine. A few weeks ago, I hit another landmark. Not a number this time, but a bird.

When I was about five years old, my parents loaded all our camping gear and my stuffed animals and me into our trusty white station wagon and headed south away from Vermont in late winter so my mother could get warm in the sun and my father could add some desert birds to his life list. He especially wanted a canyon wren, known for its beautiful, melodic song of descending notes, spiraling off canyon walls and echoing in the hot, dry air. Big Bend National Park in Texas was our destination. It had plenty of canyons, plenty of hot dry air, and hopefully an elusive canyon wren.

The park had way too much hot, dry air, in my five-year-old opinion. Even my mother agreed that temperatures in the 90s under a blinding sun were a little extreme, so we rearranged our daily schedule to get up at four in the morning, be on the trail at six, hunt for birds until lunch time, and then return to our shady tent for a siesta until the sun got lower in the sky and the birds became more active again. There seemed to be enough birds around to keep even my father happy—white-winged doves cooing, Say's phoebes looking for bugs, acorn woodpeckers stashing nuts in holes in trees, spotted towhees gazing at me with eerie red eyes. Nice, happy desert birds. My father thought they were great, but the canyon wren remained elusive.

As the end of our three-week trip neared, my father started setting our alarm for three o'clock in the morning instead of four so we could be on the trail by dawn. He pushed our siesta back until two in the afternoon. But the canyon wren did not seem to notice.

The last day of our stay was the hottest and windiest yet. We needed a flashlight to hike down the steep, dusty slope that led to my father's last hope, Boquillas Canyon on the Rio Grande River. I trudged sleepily along in his footsteps, trying not to step on prickly pears. The minute the sun broke the horizon, the temperature began to

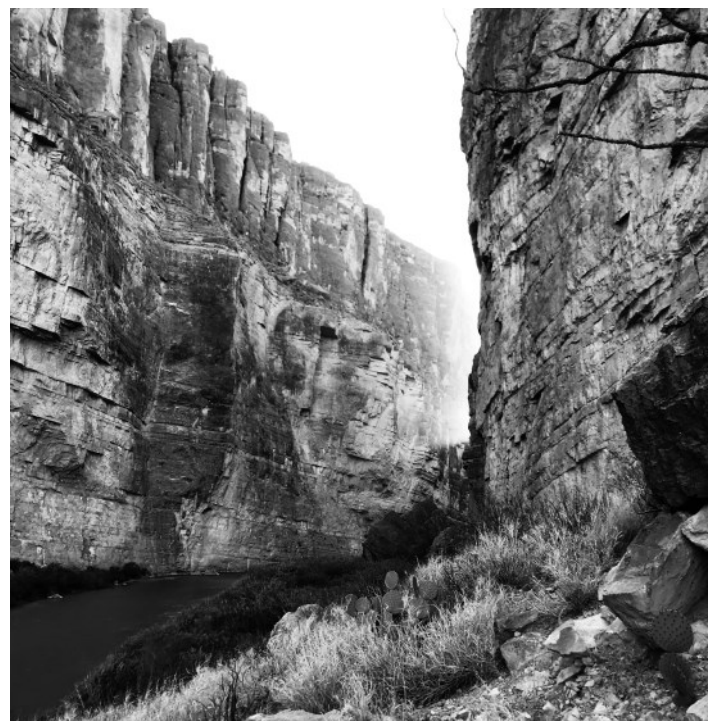
climb too. As we approached the river, my sneakers promptly filled with gritty sand. No canyon wren greeted us, but a swarm of bloodthirsty gnats did.

The canyon walls loomed around us, the narrow river a dark line edged with the only greenery in the entire park. We left the cooling wind behind, and heat poured out of the mouth of the canyon. My father headed blithely into the abyss. I sat down on a rock, narrowly missing a prickly pear, and dissolved into tears. My friends had been heading for Disney vacations or delicious days on the couch. I never wanted to hear the name canyon wren again as long as I lived.

My father turned around and came back, looking as torn as I'd ever seen him. Clearly, his daughter had reached the end of her normal good naturedness, but the canyon was calling to him....

I will never know which he would have chosen, his daughter who was about to succumb to heat stroke and gritty feet, sucked dry by gnats, or his life list, because at that moment of crisis, the air was pierced by the clear,

... continued on page 6



*Santa Elena Canyon, Big Bend National Park
photo by Erin Talmage*

The Carver's Daughter (continued)

spiraling descent of notes that could only come from one throat. My father, ecstatic, whirled around, whipped up his binoculars, and cried the most wonderful words I'd ever heard— "There it is!"

I didn't even bother to look. I was half way up the slope before he lowered his binoculars.

I think he felt a little guilty, because on the way back to the campground, he stopped at a pullover where some Mexicans, who lived in the town of Boquillas across the river, were selling their wares to tourists. I wasn't going to get out of the car for anything, but I hoped he'd come back with some beads or a pottery mug or a figurine, and I got really excited when I saw him dig his wallet out of his pocket. When he got back to the car, he handed me... a rock.

It was pretty, I admit, all lavender and white swirls, about as big as my hand.

"It's fluorite," he said, as though that explained why he'd chosen it above a bracelet.

"Like what the dentist puts on my teeth?" I asked.

He looked stumped. "Not really sure. Maybe they make it from that? But it's a mineral, which is different from a rock."

It looked like a rock to me. But it was pretty, and anyway, it was cool in the car and I was never going to have to look for canyon wrens again for the rest of my life. I put my piece of fluorite away next to my stuffed animals.

Some fifty years later, at the end of February 2023, my husband and I drove into Big Bend National Park. We weren't in a station wagon, we were in our motorhome, complete with running water and air conditioning. My husband wanted to do some hiking, and I was working on building my life list. But I wasn't sure, even after all these years, if I was ready to face the dreaded Search for a Canyon Wren Saga that had scarred my youth.

But, symbolically enough, my father's birthday, February 21, fell during our trip, and with a resigned sigh, I told my husband where I wanted to go that day. Boquillas Canyon. I had not been there since my meltdown on the rock when I'd been five, but I heroically put my binoculars around my neck, filled up the water bottles, and we headed down the same hot, dusty slope toward the canyon. I avoided the prickly pears as we reached the Rio Grande's edge, where the river made the same dark line edged with

green that I remember as it snaked between the towering walls. Gnats rose in a swarm at our approach. Heat wafted out, and sand got in my shoes.

I faltered, looking back toward the high ground and cooler air. But then I drew a deep breath and headed in.

And almost at once, right across from the jumble of rocks where I'd plopped down as a child, I heard the same lovely descending spiral of song. My husband turned to me.

"Is that—"

"That's it!" I raised my binoculars, and I saw it, a tiny dark form darting from one perch to another on the Mexican side of the river. It looked no bigger than a moth from where we stood, but it was huge to me.

And again, I started crying.

On our way out, a Mexican man on horseback asked us if we'd like six tamales for ten dollars. We said no thanks, but I wanted in the worst way to ask if he had any fluorite.

Life list update: the canyon wren was bird number 373 for me. As of March 8, 2023 I am up to 385 birds and counting.

— 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 the museum, at Phoenix Books in Burlington and Essex, as well as from all major online booksellers. An eBook version is available from the latter. Her young adult novel, *Under the Willow*, is available through [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

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>.

Visit our

TRAVELING DISPLAYS

August	<i>Welcome to the Museum</i> (Guilford)
September	<i>Carving Tools</i> (S. Burlington)
	<i>Birds In Art</i> (S. Burlington)

Ask your local library if they've borrowed one yet.

ART SHOW AT THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM: SPARK! FUELING A LOVE OF BIRDS

The Birds of Vermont Museum has been hosting themed community art shows since 2014. Each winter, the staff develops a bird-related theme for the exhibit and posts a Call to Artists, inviting submissions in varied media. Our 2023 art show, Spark!, brings together well over 60 artists, photographers, and poets of all ages. Most artists are from Vermont.

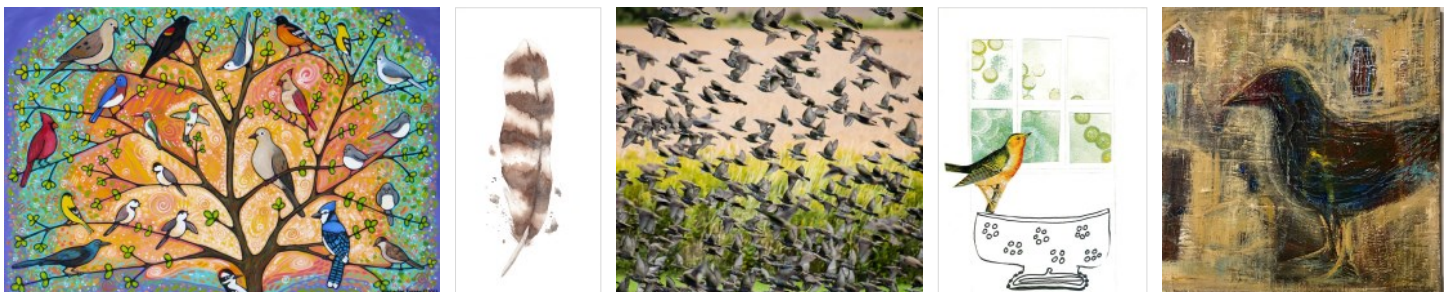
Many birders—and artists—have a “spark” moment that fueled a lifelong love of birds and birding and took them in unexpected directions. What spark stories do you find in these stories, poems, and images? The museum hopes these works inspire you also to create connections with birds, birding, conservation, and other bird-friendly folks.

The show runs from May 1 to October 31 at the Birds of Vermont Museum in Huntington. The Museum is open Wednesdays – Sundays, from 10am to 4pm, during these months.



Exhibiting Artists and Writers

Alyssa Bierer	Deb Sharpe	Karla Van Vliet	Porter M
Alyssa DeBella	Denise Letendre	Katrina Meyers	Rhea Fowler
Annette Goyné	Diane DeBella	Kay Johnson	Rory Beerits
Aprille Soons Palmer	Douglas Cruikshank	Kimberlee Forney	Sara Webley
Ashley Orton	Elaine Colan	Leslie Fry	Sarah Rosedahl
Caden A	Elizabeth A Emmett	Leslie Rubman	Shannon Blake
Carol MacDonald	Eric Jensen	Lily Hinrichsen	Summer Stratton
Carol McDowell	Gretchen Alexander	Lori Hinrichsen	Susan Bull Riley
Carol Talmage	Jennefer Jolls	Marcia Vogler	Susan Parente
Carole Cavanaugh	Jennie Johannesen	Marianne Mullen	Suspicious Duck
Carrie Marr	Jo Marsan	Matti C	Suzanne Clark
Cat McKeen	Judy Brook	Miriam Adams	Tricia Knoll
Charley Harvell	Juniper M	Nancy Leeman	Vivienne Strauss
David Pearson	K-2 students from the	Nancy Stone	
Deana Allgaier	Green Mountain Com-	Nicole Gadouas	
Deb & Jon Meyer	munity School	Pedro Salas	



Art works shown here are by Aprille Soons Palmer, Karla Van Vliet, Suspicious Duck, Nancy Leeman, Leslie Fry, Katrina Meyers, Kimberlee Forney, Deana Allgaier, Elaine Cohan, Lori Hinrichsen, and Marianne Mullen. Come see these in person!

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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

SAVE THE DATES

Sep 10	Meander for Mushrooms
Sep 16	Feather Carving
Sep 17	Lady Beetles
Oct 8	Tree Walk & the Big Sit
Nov 5	Race Around Birds
<i>Last Saturdays</i>	Bird Monitoring Walks

Details inside and on our website. To register, visit
<https://birdsofvermont.org/special-upcoming/> or
call (802) 434-2167 or email museum@birdsofvermont.org

Volunteers always welcome



#AskBob

Q: What is your pet peeve?

A: Those, who from ignorance or greed, damage the earth.

#AskBob comes from a collection of answers given in 1989 to John Johnson of the Burlington Free Press.

Board of Trustees 2023

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
	Jon Broschius	

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

*If you'd like to receive a color PDF edition by
email, please contact us.*

Visit our website to download back issues.

*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.*