

Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM
Volume 26 • Our 25th Year

Winter 2012



YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY

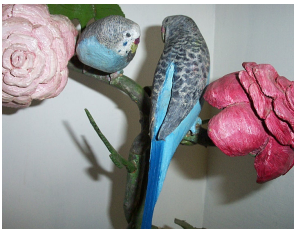


Bob Spear standing in front of the original workshop before the Birds of Vermont Museum was built.

Photograph by Kari Jo Spear, 1977 or 1978



The Museum with 2-story barn housing exhibits, offices, and gift shop attached to the workshop. A covered generator protects office and maintenance equipment.. Winter 2012

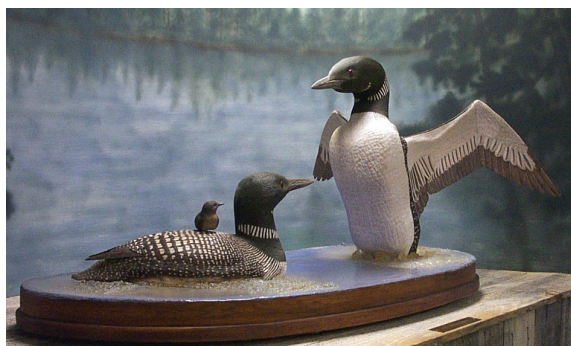


In June of 1987 the Birds of Vermont Museum opened its doors for the first time. Admission was free, and the museum consisted of the workshop, which held the gift shop, and the upper floor of the barn. Visitors could see just over 200 carvings.

Since then Bob, the Board, the staff, and many, many members and volunteers have worked very hard continuing to create carvings and exhibits, greatly improving the museum's infrastructure, building a trail system, and speaking with thousands of visitors.

Every day we work towards our mission: "providing education, nurturing an appreciation of the environment, and studying birds and their habitats using woodcarvings and other museum resources".

This year we mark our **25th anniversary**! Please **join our celebration** by visiting the Museum, attending a program or event, doing some woodcarving, or just going out birding.



THE BIRD CARVER'S DAUGHTER

Part 2: the Pre-teen Years (or, Why I'm Not a Carver)

One summer when I was eight or nine years old, my father decided to give carving lessons. About a dozen people signed up, mostly teachers who knew him from the Audubon Society. But there were three people there who weren't teachers—my mother, our eleven-year-old neighbor, and me. We met every Tuesday night in my father's den. It was supposed to be a relaxed, casual gathering of people sitting in a circle making piles of shavings on the floor while they created a thing of beauty out of basswood as my father circled among them, offering his expert and benign advice.

Instead, it turned into a pain-filled bloodbath that caused me so much trauma that I have not even carved a jack-o-lantern since.

And most of it was the fault of the weather.

Vermont is known for crazy weather, and that summer was extremely hot and humid. This led to an amazingly regular cycle of thunderstorms that built up all afternoon and let loose in the evening. It seemed that every Tuesday night, the biggest storm of the week unleashed itself, and the members of my father's carving class would huddle in the den, away from the windows, and whittle with most of their attention on the wind, rain, and lightning outside. The result was so many nicked thumbs and fingers that my father began bringing Band-Aids to class and there were lots of jokes about everyone carving cardinals and not having to paint them.

I proudly announced that I wanted to carve a horse, and my father sawed out a block of wood with four legs for me. I was crazy about horses, and my father already had a monopoly on birds. My neighbor was carving a Common

Goldeneye. I don't remember what my mother was making—I'm not sure she even knew. I think she was going to let the wood speak to her.

Anyway, on the night I started work on my horse, the worst storm of the summer hit. I glued myself to my mother's side and began to carve. I held the chisel the way my father showed me and carefully pushed it through the wood, aiming away from my fingers. It took a lot of strength, and the end of the chisel looked really, really sharp. I took three gouges out of my horse and stopped, not sure that I wanted to do any more. I really didn't want Band-Aids all over my hands like everybody else. (Except for my father, of course. He was already, like, on his third chickadee for the night.)

Then there was a terrible bolt of lightning and a deafening crash of thunder, all the lights in the house went out, and my mother screamed. In the next flash, I saw that her left hand was covered with blood.

My father had a flashlight handy. In its light, he and couple of my mother's friends whisked her upstairs to the bathroom. I was completely forgotten in the confusion, and the next thing I knew, I was as sitting with a bunch of strangers in the dark. I got up to grope my way upstairs, but someone told me to sit still and not move. I was barefoot, and everybody had dropped their tools on the floor. So there I sat, trapped by hostile knives in the worst thunderstorm I could remember while my mother bled to death upstairs.

Well, it turned out she didn't actually bleed to death,

but she still has a scar on her thumb.

At that point, I was having some serious misgivings about my future as a carver. I made my decision the next day. I walked over to my friend's house,



Continued on page 3

where he was sitting on the front steps, wearing shorts, working on his Goldeneye. I called, "Hello!"

He looked up, saw me, and buried his chisel up to the hilt in the inside of his left leg. As his mother rushed him to the ER, I decided that my creativity would have to find another outlet.

Today, my horse with three gouges lies in comfort in my father's cabinet. I think he still hopes I'll get back to it someday. But I know for a fact that the Horses of Vermont Museum will never be. I have decided that pens, while they might be mightier than a sword, are a heck of a lot safer than chisels and knives.

—Kari Jo Spear 

This article also appears online at <http://bovm.wordpress.com/2012/01/31/the-bird-carvers-daughter-part-2-the-pre-teen-years>

Kari Jo Spear's young adult, urban fantasy novel about two gay teenagers, *Under the Willow*, is now available at Phoenix Books in Essex, Vermont, and on-line at Amazon and Barnes and Noble.

THANK YOU

Thank you, members, friends, organizations, birders, all, for your support in so many varied ways. A special shout-out goes to

- ◆ Donors to our annual appeal and members who renewed at that time. Your ongoing support is invaluable
- ◆ Dick Allen, for carving
- ◆ Bob Abell, for helping obtain an IBM grant
- ◆ Jim Osborn and all the Big Sitters (birders and pledgers): Allison G., Carol M., Shirley J., Kirsten T., Bill and Mae M., Kerry and Linda H., Nancy P., and others
- ◆ Anne Jobin-Picard for the peanut butter that led to a fun sticky bird-food-making experiment, and Lori Hinrichsen, for getting messy with us
- ◆ Ivan and Dorothy Pels, who responded to our need for storage plastic bins
- ◆ Stewart Kirkaldy, for ensuring new motion-sensor lighting for the parking lot and walkway and ongoing work in our library

OTTO MEIER

We were saddened to hear of the passing of Otto Meier, a long-time supporter of the Museum. Otto was a fervent birder and friend of Bob Spear. After hearing this news, Bob showed the staff a photo of a Blackburnian Warbler that Otto had taken on the Museum land. Bob always kept the photo on his desk.

Otto's friends and family reached out to the Museum from many places and their generous memorial donations have been put towards an exhibit sponsorship. Above the Magnolia Warbler we will place a plaque reading:

In honor of Otto H. Meier for his lifelong appreciation of nature and his love of birds, from his family and friends.

Thank you, Otto and family and friends. 



Magnolia warbler, carved by Bob Spear in 1988

Grant-givers:

- ◆ Northeast Delta Dental, for sponsoring the newsletter
- ◆ IBM, for helping us upgrade old computers
- ◆ Ronald McDonald House Charities, for supporting our children's programming

Art Contest Sponsors:

- ◆ The Engraving Bench
- ◆ Black Horse Fine Art Supply
- ◆ Guy's Farm and Yard
- ◆ Essex Cinemas
- ◆ Inspiration Arts and Crafts Supplies



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS, WINTER–SPRING 2012

Winter Bird Feeding and the Great Backyard Bird Count



Wednesday, February 15, 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Join Board President Shirley Johnson at City Hall in South Burlington for a slideshow-style presentation on Winter Bird Feeding and the Great Backyard Bird Count with the Birds of Vermont Museum. Sponsored by South Burlington Seniors. A special presentation for our 25th Year.

Free! • Best for adults

The Great Backyard Bird Count

Friday-Monday, February 17-20

Museum Open

Saturday February 18,
10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.



Wherever you are, you, your friends, children, grandchildren, parents, teachers, and even your local baristas are all invited to count birds! Create a real-time snapshot of where birds are across the U.S. and Canada. For more info, visit <http://www.birdcount.org>, or visit us on Saturday for bird watching, advice, identification help, tips, and bird-counting company.

Free with museum admission • Perfect for citizen scientists of all ages

Bob Spear's Birthday

Tuesday, February 21

Happy Birthday, Bob! Have some cake in Bob's honor. (See also our news of Bob on page 5).

Where's the Snow Bird? (School Vacation Program)

Tuesdays, February 21 & 28, 10:30a.m.-11:30a.m.

What do birds do in the winter? How do you know which bird visited before you came by? Come share a winter story, explore snowy evidence (if there's snow!), and craft a souvenir of your visit to the museum. Perfect for home-schoolers and kids on break. We plan to go outside!

Best for ages 3 to 10. • \$10 members, \$15 non-members. Fee includes museum admission for one child and accompanying adult.

Bird Monitoring Walks

Last Saturdays, February-April, 8:00a.m.–9:00a.m.

Join us for an early morning walk as we continue an ongoing monitoring program of birds identifiable from our trails. Walk may start earlier as spring arrives.

Free • Appropriate for experienced birders.

Water Birds of Vermont



Friday, March 9, 3:00p.m.–4:30p.m.

Join Museum Educator Allison Gergely for a program about Vermont's water birds and the Birds of Vermont Museum at the Aldrich Public Library in Barre, Vermont. A special presentation for our 25th Year.

Free • Great for adults and older children

Bird Homes (School Vacation Program)

Tuesday, April 24, 10:00 a.m.–11:30a.m.

What counts as a bird "home"? A nest? A roost? Habitat? Territory? Ecosystem? Homeschoolers and vacationing children are invited to discover more as we craft our interpretations of "home" for a bird.

Best for ages 3 to 10 • \$10 members, \$15 non-members. Fee includes museum admission for child and one accompanying adult.

Exploring Binoculars (School Vacation Program)

April, Date and Time TBD—watch the website!



Ever wondered how binoculars work? Ever wanted to take some apart? Home-schooling and vacationing children are invited to disassemble non-working binoculars, investigate optics, and consider why eagle eyes work. Enrollment limited to number of defunct pairs of binoculars on hand (feel free to bring your own ancient, damaged, or not-very-good-anymore pair...but they may never be the same again).

Best for ages 8-16. Younger children should please bring an adult to help. Physics teachers welcome! • \$10 members, \$15 non-members. Fee includes museum admission for child and one accompanying adult.

Please call (802) 434-2167 to pre-register for all programs.

Email us at museum@birdsofvermont.org with any questions or comments.

Volunteer Work Day

Saturday, April 28, 9:00a.m.–1:00p.m.

Help us prepare the Museum for the 2012 season! Do windows, clean nest boxes, work on trails (weather permitting), prepare materials for visitors and school groups, add bird sighting data to online databases, and much more. Lunch will be provided. Please let us know you're coming.

Opening Day

Tuesday, May 1, 10:00a.m.–4:00p.m.



Come and join us on our first open day of the 2012 season. Celebrate our 25th year!

Museum admission applies • Fabulous for all (and a door prize for the 25th visitor!)

Storytime in the Nestlings Nook

Second Tuesdays, May–October, 10:30 a.m.–11:15a.m.

Join us for stories about birds and more, followed by a craft project, music, or nature walk, depending on the topics and weather. Got a favorite book about birds? Share it with us!

Free with museum admission • Great for pre-schoolers

Sundays for Fledglings

Sundays, May–October, 2:00 p.m.–2:45 p.m.

Hike, create, explore, carve, act, write, and investigate with us. Discover birds...and amphibians, mammals, trees, ferns, forests, insects, and other natural community members. Earn a Junior Birder patch! Activity details will be posted at the museum and online each week.

Free with museum admission • Designed for ages 5-9



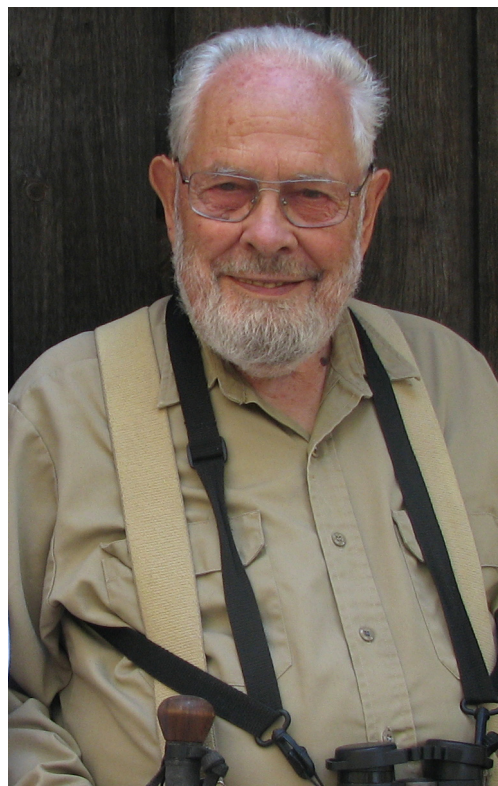
A Fledgling working towards his Junior Birder's patch last year. (He earned it too!)

BOB TURNS 92!

We're pleased to recognize Bob's 92nd birthday on February 21. Have a piece of cake (or two) in Bob's honor. All of us at the museum will! We will again have a birthday celebration during the summer.

Those wishing to mark Bob's birthday are encouraged to make a \$92 contribution to the Birds of Vermont Museum. You can send your check to the Museum at 900 Sherman Hollow Road, Huntington, VT 05462, or donate securely online at www.birdsofvermont.org.

Thank you for your Support!



Looking Ahead

- May: Herrick's Cove Wildlife Festival
- Bird Day Festival
- Early Bird Walks
- June: Early Bird Walks
- Tweet Day

What would you like to do? Tell us! You can sign up for our email event updates at our website, too.

Check our website for updates and additions:
<http://www.birdsofvermont.org/events.php>

CARVING REPORT

Bob is once again spending the winter in Cedar Key, Florida, watching herons, egrets, ibises, and roseate spoonbills come and go in the mangrove swamp behind his condo. As he approaches 92, watching big birds from a third floor balcony above a Florida swamp sure beats shoveling his way out to the Museum's bird feeders! But he still offers seeds and suet to the busy little neighborhood birds who swing by his feeders throughout the day. He has his tools and the Canada goose carving with him, but like a true birder, he finds the live ones much more interesting.

Dick Allen continues to carve for the Museum's collection as well, and is currently working on a pair of Greater Scaup. We can't wait to see the final work.

Dick also helped produce the cardinal ornaments we sent as thank you gifts to significant donors during

the year-end appeal. After roughing out each ornament, Dick brought the ornaments to the Museum. Erin, Allison, and Kirsten, all of whom are learning to carve, each contributed to the smoothing, burning, and painting of each ornament.



Turns out, carving can be a cooperative venture!



Interested in volunteering? Watch the website, subscribe to the events calendar, or let us email you with possibilities. You can also call (802) 434-2167 or e-mail museum@birdsofvermont.org

VOLUNTEERS

Thank you, volunteers! In 2011, volunteers of all ages contributed about 1200 hours(!) to keep the Museum attractive, accessible, safe, and informative. We are proud to acknowledge our dedicated eighty-year-old seniors as well as multiple generations of family members who all lend a hand.

Manual work in 2011 included painting a number of indoor spaces; outdoors a reliable crew groomed and maintained our walking trails following a very challenging weather year. Students in Essex High School's Tech class presented us with three handsome picnic tables, which served many groups and occasions over the year.

Our art contest couldn't happen without the behind-the-scenes help procuring prizes, judging entries, and connecting winners with awards.

Our outreach continues to grow with volunteers promoting the Museum at festivals, farmers' markets, and fundraising events. Volunteers present programs and recruit interns; lead bird walks; scan the skies during The Big Sit; and count birds with us. Volunteers serve as docents and gift shop aides, catalogue and research resources in our Museum's library, and update species' records for our displays. Volunteers build bird-houses to sell in our gift shop and plant bird-friendly flowers in our gardens.

Our current volunteers are fabulous and faithful, but we can always use more volunteers of any age and interest! You, a friend, both together? Once, twice, monthly, weekly? Great!

And thank you. Again and again.



2011 ART CONTEST

We had first, second, third prize winners, some honorable mentions, and some of special note, e.g., “Best Chuckle” and “Most

Like Marc Chagall.” First-place images are shared here (by permission of artists and parents).

The winners are:

Traditional Drawing

Ages 0-5: Maeve, Ruby, Fiona, Cecily, Avery and Pace

Ages 6-8: Emma, Alyssa, Alex, Marlie, and Morgan

Ages 9-13: Carrie, Erin, Jordan, Brandon, Graham, Sevi, Jason, and Breanna

Ages 14-18: Daniel and Chad

3D

Ages 0-5: Tom

Ages 6-8: Anna, Katie, Hayley and Morgan

Watercolors and Resists (art class)

Ages 6-8: Macey, Zachary, Sarah, Sidney, Tyler, Lindsay, and Reece

Ages 9-13: Jasmine, Tyler, Color, Jake, Caitlin, Calvin, Jonah, Hannah, Olivia, Ben, Mikayla, and Sid

Masks (art class)

Ages 6-8: Ethan, Maria, Isabella, Maxwell, Mary, Leah, Carter, and Elizabeth

WISH LIST

- ◆ Benches for special spots along the trails, including the pond overlook (\$250)
- ◆ Informational outdoor sign (\$250)
- ◆ Bookshelf (\$180)
- ◆ Sponsor an intern for a season (\$500-2500)
- ◆ Lighting for Photography Exhibit (\$500)

Of course we welcome any and all contributions. Checks may be made out to the *Birds of Vermont Museum* and mailed to us at 900 Sherman Hollow Road, Huntington, VT 05462. If you wish to donate an item on the list, please call us at (802) 434-2167.

Thank you!



SAVE THE DATES

Feb 15	Winter Bird Feeding & the GBBC
Feb 17-20	Great Backyard Bird Count
Feb 21	Bob Spear's Birthday Where's the Snowbird? (<i>also Feb 28</i>)
Mar 9	Water Birds of Vermont
Apr TBD	Exploring Binoculars
Apr 22	Earth Day
Apr 24	Bird Homes
Apr 28	Volunteer Work Day
May 1	Opening Day for our 25th Year
Monthly:	Bird Monitoring Walks (<i>Last Saturdays</i>) Nestlings (<i>Second Tuesdays</i>)
Weekly:	Fledglings (<i>Sundays</i>)

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

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.

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Please send comments or changes of address to

The Birds of Vermont Museum
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Newsletter supported in part by



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