

# Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM  
Volume 31

Late Fall 2017



## GROWING LIKE A BIRD

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to start life as a baby songbird?

That's exactly what the children who participated in the Birds of Vermont Museum's *Nestlings Find Nature* program did this summer. In this indoor-and-outdoor program for pre-schoolers to age six, children were engaged in learning about experiences parallel to their own that baby birds encounter as they grow from hatchling to fledgling.

Our main topics centered on the bird: egg structures and functions, an embryo's development, what it's like to have to crack open one's own eggshell, the appearance and behavior of a baby songbird, what the parent birds' roles and challenges are, and how nestlings graduate to fledgling status.

In addition to reading story books, crafting models, and writing poetry, we observed songbirds outside, mimicked their behavior and calls, learned about the challenges for survival in their world, and acted out ways birds avoid predators, find food, and embark on new journeys at migration.

In answer to a question posed at the end of the program, one child responded that the best part about being a baby songbird is hatching out of the egg and stretching its wings! Another question was, "What is the hardest part about being the parent of a baby songbird?" The reply: "The number of times they have to bring food to their babies!" Amen to that.

— Allison Gergely 



A "Nestling" experiments with binoculars

### Pop-up Nestlings

Our *Nestlings Find Nature* program from the summer season flies on into winter learning activities with POP UP gatherings once a month from December 2017 through March 2018. That's second Tuesdays: December 12, January 9, February 13, and March 13 from 10:30 – 11:30am, ages 3-6, regular admission rates.

We will hike, observe, collect, create, question, explore, and more. Spread the word, just like a bird!

Please call or email the Museum to register, drop-ins welcome. Dress for the weather.





## THE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

*Lincoln's Sparrow, Pitcher Plant, and Fly  
carved by Bob Spear*

### *Part 14: Lost in the Bog*

I'd always thought that bogs were kind of cool. They had neat plants that ate their prey alive, and I'd read that if you fell in, your body would be preserved and turn up in a thousand years or so when somebody was cutting peat moss. If you jumped up and down, what looked like solid ground would ripple away from you as though you were dancing on the surface of water. And the best part was that bogs had lovely boardwalks that wound through them. No scrambling over rocks or roots and getting hot and dirty, which were the main reasons I didn't much enjoy hiking. So when my father asked if I wanted to go on a field trip he was leading into a bog, I said sure. I should have gotten tipped off when he said to wear old sneakers or boots.

About a dozen of us arrived at the designated parking place beside the road early in the morning on a lovely, sunny day in May. Except that the moment we got out of the cars, the wind started to blow, the temperature dropped twenty degrees, and it began to rain. None of us had raincoats. I knew that wasn't going to stop my father, so I pulled up the hood of my sweatshirt and prepared to make the best of it. Hopefully any self-respecting bird would go for cover on a day like this, so I figured a quick stroll along the boardwalk and we'd be heading for a nice dry restaurant to have lunch.

I looked for the trailhead. All I could see was a cow pasture. My father happily climbed through the fence, and the rest of the group trooped after him. Okay, I thought, maybe he'd told me to wear old sneakers in case I stepped in some cow mementoes before we got to the boardwalk. I climbed through the fence, too, and had no trouble avoiding the evidence that this was, in

fact, part of an active farm. We walked down a steep hill to what appeared through the mist to be a swamp at the bottom of the valley.

"Here we are," my father said brightly, pointing to dead trees festooned with hanging moss above rotting logs, and pools of water choked with duckweed. "It's right out there."

The mist turned into thick fog, and the rain picked up. I peered around for the elusive boardwalk. It must be the world's narrowest one, I thought, and then I got a sinking feeling. "What's right out there?" I asked.

"The bog," my father said, a little slowly, as though I really should have remembered why we were here. "It starts on the other side of this swampy area."

And then I realized that everyone was tucking their pants into their boots, and with no further ado, my father set off through the duck weed, clambering over the rotting logs, and pushing his way past the moss-festooned trees. I bit back a groan as we followed him in.

At first, we tried to pick out a pathway, keeping to what passed for higher ground. But the footing grew wetter, squishier, and muddier. People in boots looked with sympathy at my sneakers, but by the time they were going in over their boot tops and had to stop, sit down on a log, and dump out slimy water, I realized I had the better deal. I tried to pretend I was a little swamp sprite, gracefully leaping from bough to hillock. But soon, I was feeling a bit waterlogged. Very waterlogged. The rain had turned to a downpour. And the wind was colder.

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## *The Carver's Daughter* continued from page 2

"Here's peat moss!" my father suddenly exclaimed, and sure enough, the stuff we were walking on—it hadn't been "ground" for a long while—turned into a densely woven matt of peat that stretched in all directions as far as the eye could see, which wasn't very, at the moment. We all got excited and jumped up and down and laughed at the ripples we made. They were definitely bigger than the ripples caused by walking on a boardwalk.

Now that we'd all had fun rippling, and no one had seen a single bird, I was more than ready for a restaurant. Unfortunately, lunch turned out to be granola bars munched as we walked, or rather squished, farther and farther into the bog. We saw pitcher plants and bog cotton and cute little miniature trees that looked like wild bonsai. My father finally spotted a couple miserable-looking cedar waxwings. A crow cawed in the distance. But what we mostly saw was lots and lots of fog. And it got colder and colder.

My father cautioned us to stay away from black spots, where the peat was rotten and a person could fall through. Almost at once, we came to one—an ominous

circle of black moss and dark water. "I didn't mean it about the thousand-year-old bodies," I whispered, and kept repeating it as it got even colder.

Someone found a spot where methane gas was leaking to the surface, probably from one of the bodies, I figured. He lit it on fire with his lighter, and flames shot into the sky with a whoosh and then went out. I heard Gollum say not to follow the lights, and I started seeing hilts of swords from a long-forgotten battle poking through the moss. Soon I was seeing dragons moving sinuously through the fog behind us. Until it began to get too dark to see much of anything.

I wasn't the only one glad to hear a warm, welcoming "Moo," in the distance. We all flocked toward the sound, and soon we were wallowing through the swamp again, this time not even trying to stay clean. Then we were on solid ground—ground!—again, and at last we climbed back through the fence and stood on the edge of the road.

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## *Carving Report*

**Jim Mitchell**, who created several carvings in our Spring Wetland Diorama, won six awards in the New England Woodcarver's Show, including First Place for both an Eagle and for a Red-winged Blackbird, as well as an Honorable Mention for the Horned Grebe that is on display here. Congratulations, Jim! You can see photos at <http://www.newc.org/2017-sow-photos>.

Last September, **Dave Tuttle** led a one-day woodcarving workshop on carving a beaver. For December, the class chose to do "Snow People and Wee Trees". Come to this workshop, carve, paint, enjoy, and help choose the February class project.

## *Trail Report*

Over the summer numerous volunteers helped us to keep the trails clean and maintained, and continued work on new trails we hope to open next year.

Unfortunately, on November 5, 2017, a severe windstorm swept into Vermont. Many trees were blown down, and as of this writing, our trails are closed. We have received very welcome offers of help to clear them, but will first need to arrange safe felling of the many trees that are not yet actually on the ground.

Please contact us if you are interested in being part of this work effort.



*Beavers by September's carvers peer over our railing.*

## COZY UP WITH THE MUSEUM

### RETURN TO WINTER HOURS

*Wednesday, November 1 • hours by appointment*

Yes, we're open! However, please call or email several days ahead to schedule your visit. We return to daily drop-in hours on May 1st. Individuals, families, and groups are welcome at all times of the year.

Regular admission (*Free* for members!)

### BIRD MONITORING WALKS

*Last Saturdays, November 25, December 30, January 27, February 24, March 31 • 8:00am-9:00am*

All birders welcome on the monthly monitoring walk, outdoors on the Museum's trails, through forest and meadow. We often have coffee afterwards, indoors at our viewing window.

Most fun for adults, older children. Please bring your own binoculars.

*Free* • Please email [museum@birdsofvermont.org](mailto:museum@birdsofvermont.org) or call (802) 43-2167 to pre-register

### #GIVING TUESDAY

*Tuesday, November 28 • all day*

Giving Tuesday is an annual celebration and encouragement of all the ways we give and receive. Instead of an object, donate to your friends' favorite non-profits on their behalf.

### RICHMOND HOLIDAY MARKET

*Saturday, December 2 • 9:00am – 3:00pm*

Richmond Town Hall, Library and Congregational Church, Bridge St. Richmond

Visit with us (and find some wonderful holiday gifts) at the Richmond Holiday Market!

### POP-UP NESTLINGS

*Second Tuesdays, December 12, January 9, February 13 March 13 • 10:30–11:30am*

Our *Nestlings Find Nature* program from the summer season flies on into winter learning activities with POP UP gatherings. We will hike, observe, collect, create, question, explore, and more.

For ages 3-6, regular admission applies (free for members) • Please pre-register by emailing [museum@birdsofvermont.org](mailto:museum@birdsofvermont.org) or call (802) 434-2167.

*Dress for the weather.*

### WRAPPING FOR THE BIRDS

*December TBD • 10 am - 10 pm*

Barnes and Noble, South Burlington, Vermont

Let us wrap your books and other gifts! (They don't even have to be about birds.) For a small donation, we will wrap your holiday gifts while you enjoy a chat with us or a cuppa joe in the bookstore cafe. It's an easy way to support the Museum while shopping.

*Volunteers welcome!* Call or email us by December 10th, (802) 434-2167 to reserve a time. Thanks!

### BIRDING WHEN NATURE THROWS CURVE BALLS

*Thursday, May 29 • 6:30pm*

Maeve Kim, birder, will amuse and startle us with a light-hearted look at all the things nature does to make it hard for us birders to see and identify the creatures we love—along with some strategies for getting around the “curve balls”! This program is for beginning and intermediate birders as well as people who just like the wonders and quirks of nature.

*Suggested donation \$10 • refreshments*

#### *In winter, look for more from us!*

Call to Artists: *Common Grounds — in honor of the 100th Anniversary of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918*

Christmas Bird Counts — all around Vermont

Great Backyard Bird Count — four days in February

The next one-day carving workshop

#### *Then get ready for*

School vacation programs

Volunteer Work Day in April

New England Naturalist Conference

And more!

All events are at the Birds of Vermont Museum unless noted otherwise.

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



# THE STATUS OF VERMONT FOREST BIRDS

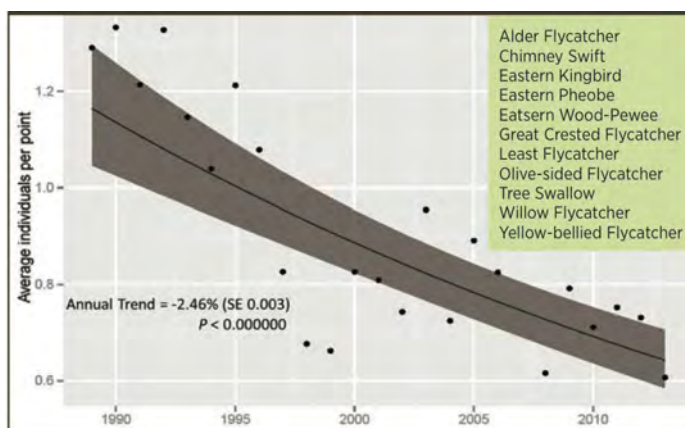
As part of our Lucille Greenough lecture series, on October 19 Steve Faccio from Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE) spoke to a rapt audience at the Museum, including birders, biologists, engineers, and conservation-minded citizens. His talk summarized some of the research findings from the first 25 years of VCE’s Forest Bird Monitoring Project. Largely, the results are about Vermont forest bird population trends, but Steve briefly discussed additional factors that are or could be affecting bird numbers.

To get the data, point counts were conducted annually in 31 mature and unmanaged forest stands throughout Vermont from 1989 to 2013. Scientists and trained volunteers detected a total 32,381 birds, representing 125 species. Overall, the number of birds detected decreased by 14.2% over the course of the study, but the details matter for conservation and management. Therefore, population trends were estimated for the 34 most abundant and widely distributed species, and of those 34 species, 13 species showed declines, 8 showed increases, and 13 showed no trend.

To look at the trends in another way, species were grouped by similar ecological traits into 12 “guilds”. Seven of these guilds declined in populations. These guilds included single-brooded species, aerial insectivores, low-canopy foragers, neotropical migrants, short-distance migrants, canopy nesters, and ground nesters. Two guilds, the ground gleaner and the high canopy foragers, showed population increases.

Steve focused for a few minutes on aerial insectivores and some reasons for their population decrease. He discussed the possibility of large-scale insect decline and the influence of increased polarized light pollution. Artificial polarizers, such as roads, roof tops, cars, solar panels, and windows, can resemble natural habitats such as water, and thus can and do attract insects. Insects subsequently lay eggs on their surfaces, which tends to be less successful for them. This affects their predators, among them the aerial insectivore guild of birds.

You can see a summary of the report and some forest management recommendations, as well as download your own copy of the report, from <https://vtecostudies.org/blog/new-vce-study-reveals-decline-in-vermont-forest-birds>. It’s 17 pages, and easy to read and share.



Overall population trend for aerial insectivores in mature, unmanaged Vermont forest stands over the last 25 years

## We owe a special thanks to

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- » Green Mountain Woodcarvers
- » Ingrid and Graeme Rhind
- » Jane Sorenson
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## SEEING WITH NEW EYES

Kristen Jensen has joined the Museum team this fall as a Communications Intern. Kristen, a junior at Champlain College in Burlington, is working toward her BFA in Graphic Design and Digital Media, with a specialization in Publication Design.

Her skill at drawing and knowledge of design were immediately obvious and she has been helping us create

and revise signs, flyers, and other Museum outreach materials. With her eye for consistent branding, she has worked with Kir Talmage and Allison Gergely to update our standard membership envelope and gift certificates.

Each intern also completes one large project during their tenure at the Museum. Kristen is planning to create a new visitor guide for the indoor Museum.

Kristen says she has always liked drawing, but these days she spends a lot of time photographing, working over and over to get the perfect picture. I don't think there has been a single day she has come to the Museum without her camera! You can follow her work on Instagram at [instagram.com/k.jensen.art/](https://www.instagram.com/k.jensen.art/).

She hopes her career will lead her to a position in visual communications with the federal government. Wherever she goes, they will be lucky to have an employee who combines her reflective nature with excellent graphic design skills.

— Erin Talmage

## *The Carver's Daughter*

...continued from page 3

Except there were no parked cars in sight.

"Well, I'll be," my father said. "I think we got turned around in the fog and we've come out on the other side of the valley."

"Yeah, no," I said before he could even suggest going back into the bog, where all the moss would look black now. On the other hand, it would be miles to walk to the cars.

"Okay," my father said. He stepped confidently to the edge of the road and raised his thumb.

I had never seen my father hitchhike in my life. Nor could I imagine anyone stopping for a bunch of bog-wraiths. Nor were there likely to be any cars on this forsaken stretch of road.

But suddenly, a dragon with fiery eyes swooped out of the dark. To my amazement, it stopped before my father, probably thinking he was some Celtic god of old,

or a moss-festooned statue come to life. I heard my father saying something about birding in the bog and the fog, and the next thing I knew, he and several other people were getting on board the dragon and flying off.

The rest of us wraiths sank down onto the grass beside the road. Someone said, "I think we're a little hypothermic."

I thought so, too, because in a few minutes, a whole flock of dragons with glowing eyes arrived and swept us all off to someplace that had a fire and hot cider, and soon after that, I was in a wonderfully hot shower and then in my very own warm bed.

But the last thing I remember hearing before I fell asleep was Doc Brown, or maybe it was it my father, saying, "Boardwalks? Where we're going, we don't need boardwalks!"

And the swamp sprite in me smiled and agreed.

—Kari Jo Spear 

**Kari Jo Spear**, daughter of Bob Spear, is a teacher, a blogger, and an author of young adult novels. She can be found online at <http://karijospear.blogspot.com/>

Earlier stories in the *Carver's Daughter* series are also on our blog, at <https://bovm.wordpress.com/tag/carvers-daughter>

**Birds of Vermont Museum**  
900 Sherman Hollow Road  
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[www.birdsofvermont.org](http://www.birdsofvermont.org)

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### SAVE THE DATES

Dec 2 Snow People and Wee Trees  
One-day Woodcarving workshop

Dec 2 Holiday Market  
(Richmond)

Dec TBD Wrapping for the Birds  
(South Burlington)

*Last Saturdays* Bird Monitoring Walks  
*Second Tuesdays* Pop-up Nestlings

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