

Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM
Volume 31

Summer 2017



GROWING A MUSEUM BY THE NUMBERS

Thirty years ago, Bob Spear first opened the Birds of Vermont Museum doors to visitors. Bob wanted to share his vision and his growing collection of bird carvings, designed to educate and inspire, with the public. Many hands helped Bob reach that milestone. Over the years Bob, the Board of Directors, staff, members, and friends shaped the Museum and its many natural and educational resources. These facts and figures briefly illustrate how the Museum has grown.

- The Birds of Vermont Museum officially took flight June 13-14, **1987**, with over **500 guests**. Mirakel Optical donated **7 pairs of binoculars**.
- Our **1st member** was future carving apprentice and museum curator, Ingrid (Brown) Rhind, May 16, 1987. She responded to a mailed recruitment letter.
- Charter members number **568**.
- Norcross Wildlife Foundation of New York granted a **\$5,000 gift** in year 2 (1988) to purchase equipment including (but not limited to) **1 television, 1 VCR, 6 VHS tapes, and 8 tape cassettes** (with player).
- The **1st anniversary** celebration attracted over **600 visitors** ...and we served ice cream!
- In 1988, a **\$100,000** Capital Campaign fund was established to begin barn renovations.
- Year 5 (1992): Bob penned an appeal to donors to raise additional funds to complete the original barn's transformation, **doubling** the museum's working space.
- **Year 9** (1996): the Museum and its donors paid off existing mortgage.
- The museum has been overseen by **7 Directors** since its inception, including Founding Director, Bob Spear, and Acting Director, Gale Lawrence
- In 2005, Bob, Ingrid (Brown) Rhind, and Eric Lazarus installed approximately **625 yards of fiber optic cables** to illuminate exhibits.
- **1230 hours** of Bob's work led to a finished life-size male Wild Turkey in 2008—using over **45 individually carved pieces**.
- The **2.55" of rain** from the storm on July 3rd, 2013, (year 26) destroyed the entrance path and damaged more streams. Need for repair led to extensive fundraising and grant applications. The coordinated effort was called Bridges to Birds and produced a bridge and many gardens!
- Birds and squirrels in the feeder zone consume about **3500 lbs** of bird seed annually.
- The museum currently boasts **510 bird carvings** depicting **260 species** and **535 carved eggs**.
- The Museum has a presence on **9 social media platforms**, yet still maintains the original phone number: **(802) 434-2167**.



Bob Spear carving in the workshop in the early 1990s

We all give THANKS to all the dedicated financial and volunteer supporters over the last 30 years.

We have a lot to celebrate—please join us for a garden party, with ice cream *of course*, on **August 20, 2017**. More numerical fun facts can be found throughout this issue and in our online blog. We're looking forward to the next 30 years!



THE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

Part 13: Daughter vs. Tractor

I had never been so terrified in my life.

I usually loved sugaring season and how maple permeated my life for those short, intense weeks between winter and spring. I loved the trees as they came to life, loved how the chickadees' spring whistles would answer the gentle creak of my father's hand awl as he tapped the trees. I loved the pinging of sap into metal buckets, loved the smell of the steam-filled sugar house, and loved the quiet roar of the evaporator over the crackling wood fire. I even loved helping out at the famous sugar-on-snow parties at the Audubon Nature Center, endlessly explaining to tourists the route a drop of sap takes on its adventure from tree to metal can.

But I did NOT like the Nature Center's tractor.

It was a huge, red behemoth with rear tires that were taller than I was. It had a seat on a spring that bounced up and down and a little pipe on the top where exhaust came out. I liked riding on the back of it just fine, standing behind my father and holding onto his shoulders. I also liked standing on the wooden runner boards of the gathering tank while my father towed it through the orchard. It was especially fun when my father drove through the muddy brook and the water gushed up over the boards. I had to pick my feet up and cling to the tank itself. He would always glance over his shoulder to make sure I hadn't been swept downstream.

But the tractor itself was loud and scary.

One year on the first day of tapping, when I was about twelve, my father hitched on the wooden, flatbed trailer and loaded it with hundreds of stacked buckets. He would drive through the orchard, stopping at central locations, and we would carefully place the required number of buckets at the base of every maple. Then, over the next few days, he and volunteers would tap the trees and hang the buckets. But he was the one who made the all-important decision about how many buckets each tree would get. It was an instinct my father had—I never saw him measure a tree's girth. After years of sugaring, each tree had become a personal friend of his.

But before we headed out that morning, he paused. "If someone drove the tractor slowly," he said, looking right at me, "and I walked along beside it to scatter buckets, it wouldn't take so long."



Bob driving a (different) tractor outside the Museum

Behind me, I felt the tractor getting taller by the second.

"You do know I'm twelve, right?" I asked. "And I can't get my learner's permit for three years?"

My father did that kind of shrugging thing he did. "Well, you've got long legs."

I rolled my eyes and was glad he hadn't pointed out that he had been driving tractors since he was six.

"I'll show you how," he said before I had agreed, and he swung himself up onto the seat. I climbed to my spot behind him. He fired up the engine and started pushing his feet on pedals I'd never really noticed before. And he did something with his right hand on some little sticky-up things near the steering wheel. All the time, he was talking very loudly over his shoulder at me.

I found myself nodding. It was kind of like when he explained my math homework. I understood it as he went, but by the time he got to the last step, the first few were long gone.

After a little while, he stopped. "Okay?" he asked.

"Yeah, I don't know," I said.

He took that as an affirmative, and before I quite knew it, we'd traded spots.

Yes, the tractor was at least six times taller when I was in the bouncy seat.

... continued on page 3

Daughter vs. Tractor (continued from page 2)

“See, your feet reach,” he said from where he stood at my shoulder.

I looked ahead of me. We were on the side of a hill. The road was just a little wider than the tractor, and it was sunken down between banks on either side. Innocent maples grew close. I glanced over my shoulder. The trailer loaded with buckets was even wider than the tractor.

“Stop before you get to the brook,” he said. “You probably don’t want to try that today.”

I shot him an incredulous glance, but he was already telling me what to do with my feet and the little sticky-up things. I drew a deep breath, held it, and tapped the thing he’d called a clutch very gently with the toe of my boot.

“Clomp on it,” he said.

I clomped.

Things happened fast. The red behemoth made a deeper throated growl than I’d ever heard before, a huge puff of dark smoke came out of the pipe, and then there was a

lurch and a jolt and we blasted forward. I heard my normally unflappable father yell something in my ear that sounded like “Steer!” But the wind racing past me tore his words away. I looked away from my feet and up the road, but it was gone and there wasn’t anything except maples in front of me.

I heard the word, “Brake!” but I had no clue which pedal that was, and the maples were picking up speed. So I slammed both my feet down on everything they could reach.

With the shriek of overstressed metal, the tractor flung itself to a halt and shut itself off, tilted to one side. Behind me, piles of neatly stacked buckets toppled into each other, flew off the trailer, crashed to the ground, and rolled down the hill. For a while, my father and I were silent, listening to buckets slam into trees. Then it was very quiet.

“Huh,” I said.

“Well...” my father said. “Guess that’s one way to scatter buckets.”

... continued on page 5

Carving Report

- ↓ The newest carving, a female canvasback (#510) carved by Dick Allen joined the collection this May
- ↓ Eleven wood carvers have work on display at the Museum in 2017



Canvasback hen, carved by Dick Allen

Trail Report

Volunteers have been hard at work on our trails. Magnus Stien, John Gergely, and Mark Moultrou especially have done comprehensive work on the acreage across Sherman Hollow Brook, mapping and carrying heavy items.

Special thanks to Magnus, who put 3500 miles on his car traveling back and forth from his home to work on these trails. He improved trail routing, marked all of them, and crafted terrific new signs as well.



Signs for Gale's Trail and Bob's Trail, thanks to Magnus Stien

BLOOM WITH THE MUSEUM

“BIRDING BY THE NUMBERS” 2017 COMMUNITY ART SHOW

Daily, through October 31 • 10am – 4pm

What would ornithology be without math? What new facts and figures about feathered phenomena do you most appreciate? See how artists integrate a sense of number with artistic expression.

Included with Museum Admission

NESTLINGS FIND NATURE

Second & Fourth Tuesdays, through October • 10:30 – 11:30am

Preschoolers discover how nestling song-birds grow and develop in their challenging world. Books, crafts, nature walks, and outdoor activities make up investigative play.

Included with Museum admission

EARLY BIRDER MORNING WALKS

Sundays, through June • 7 – 8:30am

Ramble the Museum’s forests and meadows, led by experienced Vermont birders. Finish the walk with bird-friendly coffee at the viewing window inside the Museum.

Free • Please bring binoculars & water; tick repellent recommended

WHO WALKS THESE WOODS

Second Sundays, through October • 1 – 3pm

Expert tracker Mike Kessler guides our journey into the ancient art of tracking, where we learn as much about ourselves as the animals and landscape around us.

Included with Museum admission • Please pre-register

BIRD MONITORING WALKS

Last Saturdays of every month • 7:30am though August, 8am after

All birders welcome to join our monthly monitoring walk in forest and meadow.

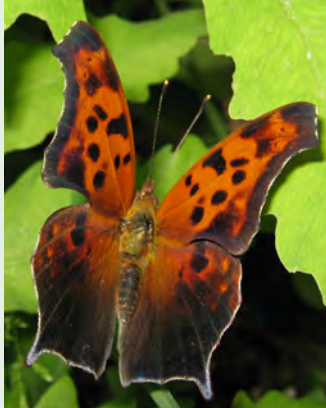
Free • Please pre-register; dress for the weather

FLEDGLINGS FIGURE IT OUT

Fourth Sundays, through October • 2:00 – 3:00pm

Kids aged 5-10 (siblings welcome) meet up for a monthly bird challenge. From what can you eat with a beak like that to why do some birds dance, we share the wild and wonderful world of birds.

Free with admission, donations welcome



ANNUAL BUTTERFLY AND BUG WALK

Saturday, July 8 • 10am – 12pm

Join Vermont Entomological Society naturalists and entomologists for an exploratory stroll on the Birds of Vermont Museum grounds. Bring binoculars, magnifying glass, and an insect net if you have one. Pack a lunch if you would like to picnic after the walk.

Free • donations welcome

RECEPTION FOR BIRDING by the NUMBERS

Thursday, July 20 • 3:30 – 5 pm

Meet “sum” artists at our afternoon reception for this year’s art-of-birds exhibit. Conversation may stick to birds, or it may go off on tangents. But the art is real.

Free • donations welcome

30TH ANNIVERSARY ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Sunday, August 20 • 2 – 4pm

We have many more than 30 people to thank for our first 30 years. Come and thank them with us! Ice cream, door prizes, random #birdbynumber facts to find, games, activities, and relaxing moments.

Free • donations welcome

THERE’S STILL TIME TO TELL US YOUR THOUGHTS

Our planning survey is still open.
Please share your ideas.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BoVMnews>

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

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

BIRDING BY THE NUMBERS

Integrating a Sense of Number with Artistic Expression

At the Birds of Vermont Museum, we like to say we are “where natural history meets art.” But flip through the last 30 years—we’ve been open since 1987 and birding for far longer—and ask, what would ornithology be without math? What new facts and figures about feathered phenomena can we most appreciate?

Inspired by these questions (and more), we sought works that might integrate that sense of number into art, bridging the real and imaginary, with birds silly and significant. We call it *Birding by the Numbers* and invite you to visit.

We had the largest response yet to our call to artists. Twenty-three artists, some new, some returning, some young, some old, contributed twenty-four works to this show. We selected artworks that we hope provide a variety of meaning, from simple counts to verbal puns, from delicate hints to meaningful data. We placed no restrictions on media, and have been rewarded with paintings, prints, quilts, collages, drawings, photography, sculpture, digital manipulations, and further combinations. The whole, though complex, works together.

Come to the Museum and admire, comment on, or be inspired by the creative observations and constructions of Brian Machanic, Carol MacDonald, Carol McDowell, Carol Talmage, Claudette Eaton, Colin Talmage, Elizabeth Spinney, Jackie Mangione, Judy Dow, Katherine Guttman, Katherine Moran, Kerry and Linda Hurd, Kimberly Sultze and Jon Hyde, Kir Talmage, Linda Di Sante, Meg Walker, Nancy Stone, Nancy Tomczak, Rachel Grossman, Stephanie Leap, and Tina Valentinetti.

The show runs from May 1– October 31, 2017 (although sold pieces may be picked up before October 31). Art is distributed throughout the first floor of the Museum.



part of “Two Birds Sitting on a Line”
sculpture by Meg Walker

Daughter vs. Tractor (continued from page 3)

He kind of laughed, but I wasn’t feeling it. So he jumped down, and he had to give me a hand because my knees weren’t working any longer.

The tractor had one set of tires in the road and the other set up the bank. There was a maple about five inches in front of its nose. I thought the poor tree looked kind of pale. If it had had apples, I’m sure it would have thrown some at me.

“Did I kill it?” I asked, nodding at the tractor.

My father snorted. “It’s a Farmall.”

Still, I noticed he gave it an apologetic pat as he climbed up to the seat. While he backed onto the road, I started picking up buckets.

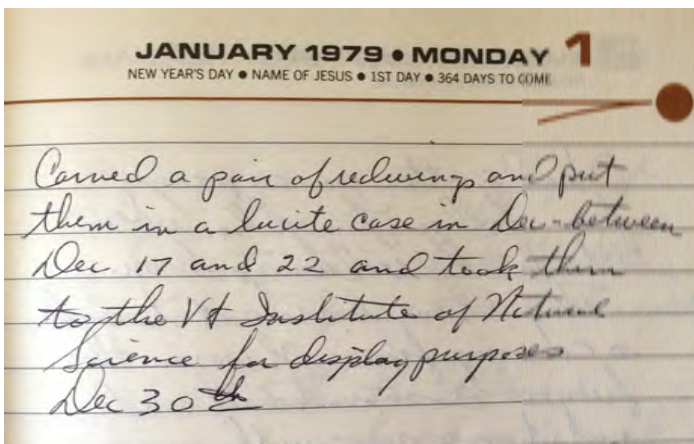
Hours later, when it was getting dark, we walked to the parking lot. But before we got into the car, my father stopped and looked at me. “Three years, you said?”

“Maybe longer,” I said.

He nodded fervently.

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>



First Birds

Bob finished carving and engineering his first display: the Red-winged Blackbird in December 1978.

It was a traveling exhibit—first at VINS—until installed in the museum. Thanks to *The Carver's Daughter*, we know Kari Jo painted the mud...



Birding Report

In the last 30 years, or so:

- » Bob authored 3 publications about birds in Vermont
- » Bob has 4 file drawers (and numerous journals) full of bird records
- » 120 species have been recorded on the Museum's property
- » 667 checklists have been submitted for this property on eBird (as of May 31, 2017).
- » Our record for number of Early Birders on one morning walk: 23
- » 4 Eastern Phoebe nestlings hatched in the bird blind this year

Follow the #BirdByNumber hashtag on twitter for more feathery factoids (or tweet your own)!

WITH THANKS

- Dick Allen
- Green Mountain Woodcarvers
- Dave Tuttle
- Mike Kessler
- Monica Loscalzo
- Lauren Bostwick
- Dick Affolter
- Addie Van der Els
- Magnus Stien
- Erny Palola
- Anne Dannenberg
- Rita Sloan
- Lynn Gavin
- Shirley Johnson
- Mae and Bill Mayville
- Kari Jo Spear
- Rich Dubie
- David Sunshine
- Greg Smith
- Jamie Shaw
- John Gergely
- Work day volunteers
- Kate Schubert
- Northeast Delta Dental and Jeff Landa
- Volunteers at Flower Show
- Mark and Henry Moultroupe
- Barbara and Jack Finlay
- In memory of John and Mary Cary
- Family and friends of David C. Blatt, Sr.
- Holly Kreiner
- Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District
- Gordon Adams
- Bobbie Summers

Our visitors, gardens, trails, birders, and more all benefit from your kind contributions. Thank you!



IN AND OUT THE GARDENS

It is hard to believe just a year ago the slopes leading down to the stream and surrounding our brand-new bridge were just mud. Hundreds of plants have been planted in just one year. The work continues with more planting this year and next. A matching donation was made in honor of Anne Dannenberg's family; we have used these funds to buy additional plants. Future donations will help us continue to grow. Our goals for 2017 include planting the rest of the shrub layer and designing and installing signs.



ARCHAEOPTERYX:

What we've learned

As we look back on the past 30 years at the museum, we can see that a lot has changed. Birds that were endangered have made a comeback, and birds that had healthy populations have declined. We might expect that nothing much has changed about *Archaeopteryx*, the 150 million-year-old “first bird” discovered in 1861. Not so!

A lot of research has been done since Bob Spear first did his *Archaeopteryx* carving in 1993. We have learned more about the link between dinosaurs and birds: what species had feathers, what species could fly, what species had hollow bones. The *Archaeopteryx* still holds a special place in evolutionary history, but the tapestry against which it is set is now all the richer.

With the discovery of more feathered dinosaurs came the discovery of the colors of those feathers, and *Archaeopteryx* was no different. Research conducted on the microstructure of one of the feathers belonging to *Archaeopteryx* determined that the color of the feather was black¹. Further research has suggested that they could have also had white coloration alongside the black².



Those feathers also helped us to understand more about the evolution of flight in modern birds. A fossil discovered in 2011 revealed feathers along *Archaeopteryx*'s legs³. These are thought to have helped with “display, camouflage, insulation, brooding and maneuvering while on the ground”³. Whether or not this “first bird” could fly in the sense that we modern birders understand is still being debated; further research has shown *Archaeopteryx* to possess a primitive girdle that might have inhibited its flight.⁴ We do know that feathers evolved separately in relation to flight, and flight might have evolved several times along the dinosaur-bird lineage.

This lineage has undergone several revisions in the decades since Bob Spear made his carving of the *Archaeopteryx*, and it is sure to undergo many more. Different analyses over the years have placed the *Archaeopteryx* both further away and closer to modern birds⁴, and it will continue to shift as more information is unveiled. Only 12 specimens of *Archaeopteryx* have currently been discovered, but as we unearth more, new information will be revealed about this animal's place on the tree of life.

During our 30th year celebration, we invite you to take a moment to observe the *Archaeopteryx* carving in our Endangered and Extinct Gallery. Even something as immutable as an ancient fossil can be seen in new light over 30 years, and we are excited to see where the next 30 years and beyond take us in our understanding of the fascinating *Archaeopteryx*.

— Monica Loscalzo 

1. Carney, R. M. et al. New evidence on the colour and nature of the isolated *Archaeopteryx* feather. *Nat. Commun.* 3:637 doi: 10.1038/ncomms1642 (2012).

2. Manning, P. L. et al. Synchrotron-based chemical imaging reveals plumage patterns in a 150 million year old early bird. *J. Anal. At. Spectrom.*, 2013,28, 1024-1030

3. Morgan, J. Early bird *Archaeopteryx* 'wore feather trousers' for display. *BBC News* 3 Jul 2014

4. Castro, J. *Archaeopteryx*: the Transitional Fossil. *Live Science* 16 Mar 2016

SAVE THE DATES

July 8 Annual Bug & Butterfly Walks
July 20 Birding by the Numbers: Meet the Artists
Aug 20 30th Anniversary Ice Cream Social

2nd & 4th Tuesdays Nestlings Find Nature
Last Saturdays Bird Monitoring Walks
Sundays, through June Early Birders Morning Walks
Second Sundays Who Walks Here
Fourth Sundays Fledglings Figure It Out

Details inside and on our website! 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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