

Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM
Volume 32

Late Fall 2018



SITTING FOR BIRDS

You may know we support and contribute to several citizen science programs. In October, the annual *Big Sit!* is one of our one-day favorites; starting in November, *Project Feederwatch* resumes, and runs through April. Although programs allow for sedentary participation, they differ in protocols and the types of data generated.

The Big Sit!

Started some 20 or so years ago, the Big Sit! (with the exclamation point) is a 24-hour global bird-a-thon...but with distance restrictions. Observations can occur only when the observer is within a 17-foot diameter circle, and the count is for species, not a number of birds. All observations from this area between midnight and midnight on the count day can be recorded. Of course, more than one person can observe, and observers may enter and exit the circle to confirm an observation, to take a break, to bring back treats for hungry birders...

Here at the Museum, Team Loonatics has been participating for 16 years. This year, they recorded 27 species. Over the whole time, they've noted a total of 63 species, of which 7 have been seen each year. Fifteen species have been recorded in only one year each. Snow Goose is perhaps not too surprising, but Wild Turkey in only one year? Why do you think that is?

Of note this year: two other Vermont circles joined the Big Sit! Welcome to them both. More about the Big Sit! is at <https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/connect/bigsit/about.php>.

Project Feeder Watch

Project FeederWatch is a survey of winter birds visiting backyards across North America. It's a program built and coordinated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Bird Studies Canada. Data are collected by citizen scientists including individuals, classrooms, and institutions, such as museums. Participants record observations of both species and the count of individuals of that species seen concurrently. Observers watch their feeders on a consistent schedule for several months, although each participant's schedule may differ slightly.

We have joined Project FeederWatch for 12 years. Staff, volunteers, and visitors help by counting birds and entering data. In those 12 years, we have documented 37 species. Some species we have only seen once, like the Bohemian Waxwing and Northern Goshawk. Others we see every year, such as the Black-capped Chickadee and Mourning Dove. Some are irregular or seen only in part of the observation season: the Red-winged Blackbird is seen

... continued on page 6

CONNECT The Big Sit!

The Big Sit! 2018 Statistics

These statistics reflect information submitted by reporting circles. As teams continue to report their Big Sit! results, the statistics on this page will change to reflect up-to-the-minute information.

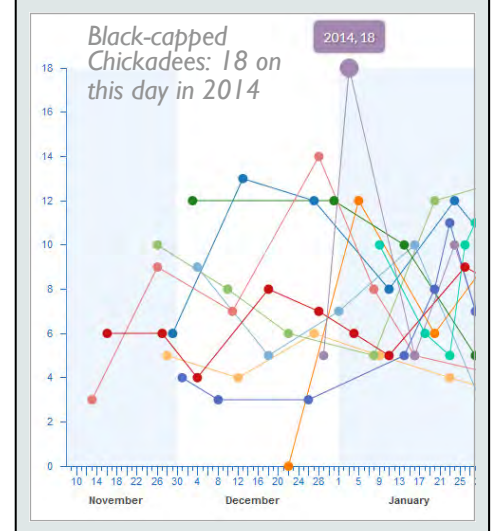
Like Share 23 people like this. Be the first of your friends.

Team Information: Loonatics - Birds of Vermont Museum

Captain: Erin Talmage
Location: Huntington, Vermont (United States)

Team Checklist

1. Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*
2. Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura*
3. Bald Eagle *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*
4. Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus*
5. Red-tailed Hawk *Buteo jamaicensis*
6. Barred Owl *Strix varia*
7. Red-bellied Woodpecker *Melanerpes carolinus*
8. Hairy Woodpecker *Picoides villosus*
9. Pileated Woodpecker *Dryocopus pileatus*
10. American Crow *Corvus brachyrhynchos*
11. Common Raven *Corvus corax*
12. Black-capped Chickadee *Parus atricapillus*
13. Tufted Titmouse *Baeolophus bicolor*
14. Red-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta canadensis*
15. White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*
16. American Robin *Turdus migratorius*
17. Purple Finch *Haemorrhous purpureus*
18. Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata*
19. American Goldfinch *Spinus tristis*
20. Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*
21. White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis*
22. Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*
23. Downy Woodpecker *Picoides pubescens*
24. Blue Jay *Cyanocitta cristata*
25. Golden-crowned Kinglet *Regulus satrapa*
26. Ruby-crowned Kinglet *Regulus calendula*
27. Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis*



THE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

Part 16: My Father and the Sea

My father was definitely a man of mountains and woods, but the sea had a piece of his heart, too. I think it stemmed from the fact that his grandmother lived in Kittery, on the Maine coast, and he used to visit her when he was a kid, digging clams and exploring old forts. Even though I rarely saw him put so much as a toe in the water, he liked to walk on the beach, and so when I would say, "How about a trip to the sea?" he'd be quick to start packing.

One late spring vacation, we headed for the island of Chincoteague, Virginia. Nearby Assateague Island had a National Seashore, and that meant birds galore. Assateague also had a big draw for me—wild ponies. I loved horses of all kinds, and the thought of seeing wild ones was thrilling.

"You can see them anywhere on the island," my father said on the first morning after we got there. I kept my eyes glued to the window as we drove across the bridge from Chincoteague to Assateague. "Let's check out the auto loop."

I was all about seeing ponies without having to hike, so I eagerly started scanning under the trees and along the fields as we turned onto a one-way paved loop road. Pretty soon we came to a marshy area, and my father pulled over. "Might be ducks," he said, a little apologetically, and in a moment, he was out of the car and setting up his old, green spotting scope. I settled in the sun and searched the tree line with my binoculars. No ponies.

An hour later, my father got back behind the wheel, saying something about teal and a gadwall. We drove around a bend slowly. It began to get wetter the farther we went. Finally, at the edge of a pond, I cleared my throat and said, "Um, I thought ponies liked grass, not cattails."

My father slammed on the brakes, said "Egrets!" and was out of the car with his scope in an instant. They were pretty, I had to admit, all white and lacey feathers. While my father looked, I got a lesson through the open window about how herons had light-colored legs and egrets had dark-colored legs, and look at that snowy egret! It had bright yellow feet that were kinda cool.

An hour later, we drove on. "I read that the ponies survived the shipwreck of a Spanish Galleon and swam to shore and have been free ever since," I said.

My father nodded, then shrugged. "Most people think they were set free to graze on the island so people could avoid having to pay livestock taxes in the late 17th Century."

"That's not very romantic," I said.

"Well, everyone agrees they've been here a long time." My father swung onto the shoulder near a large stand of *Phragmites*. "Let's just check for rails."



*Virginia Rail
carved by Bob Spear*

I sighed.

An hour later, we were almost back to the main road. I sat up straighter and started studying the higher ground. Just one last marshy area to get through... I held my breath... No.

"I hear marsh wrens!"

DANIELLE PALM

Summer 2018 Education Intern

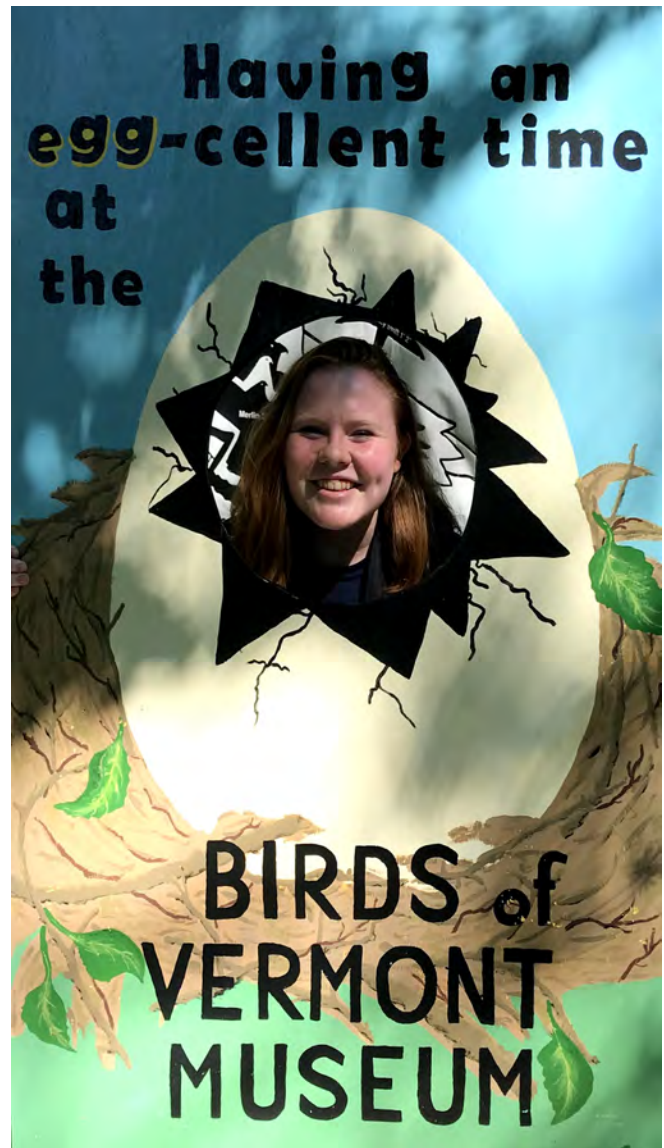
My first encounter with the Birds of Vermont Museum was in 2015 as an anxious first-year enrolled in the University of Vermont's Wildlife and Fisheries Biology program. I discovered the museum on a field trip for NR001, UVM's introductory, interdisciplinary course on natural history and field ecology. I never could have predicted that two years later, I would return to the museum for the very same class as a Teaching Assistant.

"You should really just work here," my students teased, as I lectured them through a beaming smile by the Viewing Window.

Clearly, it did not take much convincing.

My summer as the Education Intern at the Birds of Vermont Museum has easily been the best summer of my college career. Working with the museum has enabled me to come out of my shell (pun intended) by facilitating a variety of interactions with a visitors from all over the world with one commonality: a passion for ecology. It also gave me a sense of responsibility; often times, I was tasked with day-to-day engagements, including working at the front desk, co-leading monitoring walks, submitting official eBird checklists, mapping the mileage of the brand new trails, and pioneering an exhibit of Roy Pilcher's eggs of Southern Africa. My favorite project with the museum, however, may easily have been piloting my own program for children titled "Feathers, Flocks, and Far-off Places" about the importance of understanding migration.

I am truly grateful for the experience and the confidence



the museum has given me as a naturalist, conservationist, and wildlife biologist; I intend to pay it forward as graduation lurks around the corner.

— Danielle Palm 



The Carver's Daughter *continued from page 2*

After another hour watching little wrens zipping around through cattails making their loud, chattering calls, we finally headed for dry land, which was where I'd be if I were a pony.

"Look at that!" My father pointed to the edge of the road.

Yes! A real, live pile of pony poop! And it smelled fresh. I hung out the window, my heart thudding.

"I'll bet we might see ponies on that trail," my father said, pointing to a sign that advertised a wooded walk. We pulled into the parking lot up and I beat him out of the car.

Several hours later, we'd seen cardinals, woodpeckers, tufted titmice, and an unidentified hawk in the distance that disappeared before my father could get his binoculars on it. And one more pile of pony poop, not so fresh.

... continued on page 5

FALLING INTO WINTER

CALL-TO-VISIT SEASON

Thursday, November 1 — Tuesday, April 30

We're switching to winter hours again. Please visit... but do call ahead so we can unlock the door and ensure the Museum is ready for you or your group.

BIRD MONITORING WALKS

Last Saturdays, November 24, December 29, January 26, February 23, March 30, April 27 • 8:00 – 9:00am (7:30 in April)

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. Please bring your own binoculars.

Free, donations welcome

IT'S A BIRD'S LIFE

Various days

Our own Allison Gergely heads out to a variety of senior centers to share special birds with residents and friends. If you'd like to have your group or library experience these in-depth 1-hour programs, please call.

Fee applies

#GIVINGTUESDAY

Tuesday, November 27

Share the bounty of 2018 with an online donation to your favorite non-profit. Prefer paper and mail? Look for our Annual Appeal letter with this issue!

HOLIDAY MARKET

*Saturday, December 1 • 9:00am – 3:00pm
Richmond, Vermont*

Visit the holiday market in Richmond—and us! We'll have great ideas and items for holiday and birthday gifts for your friends and family.

GIFT WRAPPING

TBD

Complement your gift-giving with wrapping done by us! Call us to volunteer; our dates and bookstore location(s) were not settled by the time this went to press.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Various dates, December 14 – Sunday, January 5

Take part! For info, and to contact a nearby Circle coordinator, visit <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-count>

Best for intermediate to experienced birders

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Friday–Monday, February 15 – 18, 2018

A perfect citizen science experience for beginners of all sorts. Discover more at <http://gbbc.birdcount.org/> or come to the Museum on Saturday, February 16, and count with us.

CARVING WORKSHOP

with David Tuttle

Saturday, February 16 • 9:30am – 3:30pm

Carve and paint a small project during this one-day carving class! Wood blank, paint, snacks, and coffee provided.

All levels welcome. Brings tools, gloves, and lunch. Contact us if you will need to borrow tools or gloves.

\$30 for Museum and GMWC members • \$40 for everyone else • Please pre-register

A SERIES FOR SENIORS

Various dates

We're offering a six-session series to the Richmond Seniors. It ranges from birds of the sugarbush to coffee birds in sun and shade, plus four in-depth species introductions. If you are interested, reach out to (and join) the Richmond Seniors group.

EVENTFUL EXTRAS

Interested in a "pop-up" Nestlings or Fledglings activity for pre-K and early elementary children? Want to browse through our reference library? Need a space for your group to meet or explore?

Give us a call and let us help you out.

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

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

The Carver's Daughter continued from page 5

"Well, let's try the beach," my father said.

I had a feeling the ponies wouldn't find much to graze on there. It was getting hot, though, and wading would feel good. But on the way, we had to drive past a salt marsh. With mudflats, since it was low tide. And that meant... "Sandpipers!"

Another hour later, now that I had the difference between semipalmated sandpipers and semipalmated plovers all cleared up (greyish compared to brownish), and had agreed that peeps could be confusing, we headed for the beach at last. I was glad to leave my shoes and socks behind. I started to do one of those wild runs across the shifting sand to the waves the way heroines in romantic movies did, after which they stood at the edge of the sea and had deep thoughts that changed the course of their lives, while the wind blew their hair.

But no. My father grabbed my arm. "Sanderlings! Don't scare them!"

So we watched little, crisp white birds with dark markings dash behind waves, probing the sand with their bills until the next wave rushed in. Then they scampered back toward shore, only to turn and race outward again as the wave fell back. After the flock had moved on, I finally got to stand in the water, while my father got the scope on a red-throated loon far out to sea.

An hour later, we walked down the shore, spotting terns, laughing gulls, and geese ("Might be brant mixed in with them!") Finally, as the sun was setting across the dunes behind us, we headed back toward the car. Two piles of pony poop, I thought. Out of the whole day.

"Well," my father said, hearing my sigh. "How about crab cakes, steamers, and birch beer for dinner?"

I was okay with crab cakes, and birch beer sounded interesting, but no way was I eating something mostly raw and slimy that was still in its shell. But I knew he was passionate about them, from his childhood summers by the sea in Kittery. "Fine," I said. "As long as we get ice cream on the way back to the motel."

And then we both froze at the same time. Just under the



*Grayish. Brownish. Birds on a sandy edge, anyway.
Carved by Bob Spear*

sound of the waves on the shore, a distant, rhythmic thudding. It came from the dunes. Coming closer. We whirled, and there they were. Eight wild ponies crested a dune right behind us and galloped for the sea, chestnut and bay and black and piebald, manes and tails flying, hooves scattering the sand. They raced to the firmer footing at the edge of the waves and picked up speed, running through the water for the joy of it, sending it spraying. They played with the waves, bucking and tossing their heads, rearing and lunging in the wind. Then, in unspoken unison, they turned and flew back up into the dunes, where they vanished into the sunset and were gone, their ghostly hoofbeats fading into the sound of the surf again.

My father and I turned to each other. Even he looked a little awestruck.

"Well," he said after a while. "I guess they are wild, after all."

"Shipwreck," I said, nodding.

"Hmm." Then he nodded too. "Probably."

We started back toward the car again. "Crab cakes?" I asked.

He shook his head and grinned. "Ice cream. Then crab cakes."

We both laughed. Yeah, I thought. Visiting the sea was pretty cool.

— Kari Jo Spear 

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

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

Sitting for Birds

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most years, but usually not until late February or early March. It is interesting that the Red-winged Blackbird has been seen earlier in the year for the past two years.

Participants can download their data or look at results online (see graphs). By aggregating and examining observations from across the continent (or globe, in some cases), researchers can find trends to explore, gaps to fill, measure changes in species composition and abundance, track diseases, and seek evidence for the success of conservation efforts.

With the help of volunteer Michele Patenaude, we are planning to conduct our FeederWatch on Tuesdays through the 2018-2019 season. Call or email if you would like to observe with us. To sign up for your own school-, library-, or backyard, visit feederwatch.org.

So Much Citizen Science!

There are now hundreds of different citizen science programs (see below). The continuous and broad data collection in any one project allows the data overall to become more robust, allowing other researchers to examine and test their hypotheses about what is happening, can happen, and will happen to birds. The differing projects allow us to examine the world from differing base questions and even cross-correlate what we're learning.

At the Museum, we contribute to these programs as part of bird science and conservation; we teach about the programs as part of our educational mission. Some observations show up on our website, like recent iNaturalist records at <https://birdsofvermont.org/more/>

Lists of Citizen Science Projects Online

So many projects! We encourage you to go to one or more of these webpages and find some that tickle your curiosity.

scistarter.com/finder

www.citizenscience.org/

www.zooniverse.org/projects

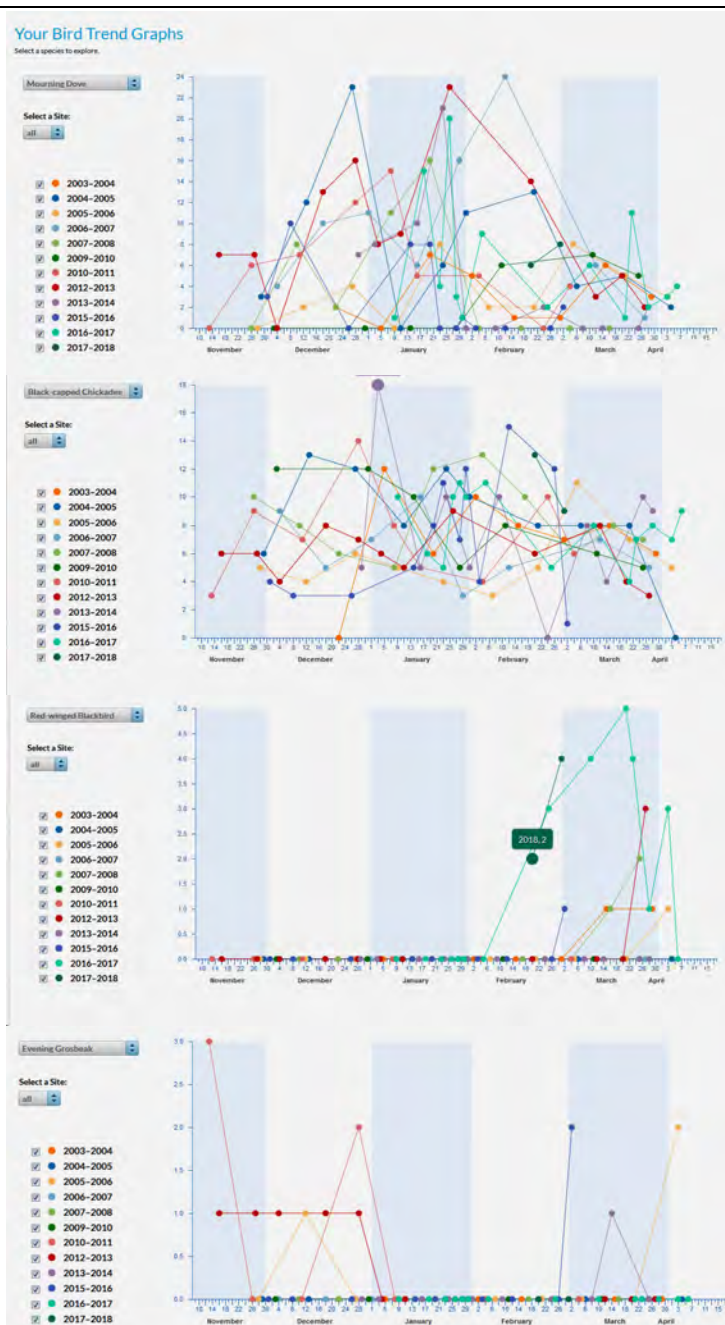
crowdcrafting.org/project/category/featured/

www.scientificamerican.com/citizen-science/

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_citizen_science_projects

www.citsci.org/CWIS438/Browse/Project/

Project_List.php?WebSiteID=7



Comparing records of numbers seen of 4 species over the season: the Blackbird is a late-winter/early spring species, while the Grosbeak is rarely seen in the middle of winter. Chickadee and Mourning Dove appear throughout. What questions do these pictured data inspire?

citizen-science/. We encourage friends, members, and neighbors to discover projects with us, then participate and share the importance and ease of being a citizen scientist with others.

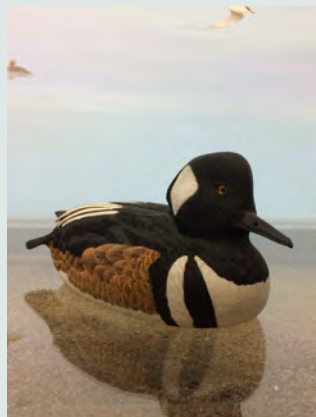
If you are curious, you can join us at the museum, or arrange and attend a talk on citizen science programs; call or email for details.

— Erin & Kirsten Talmage



Carving Report

In June we welcomed the **Hooded Merganser**



into our Spring Wetlands Diorama. Peter Bailey carved it — thank you!

IT’S A BIRD’S LIFE

Senior Community Bird Talks

Through the winter months, our outreach programming engages members of four local senior residences. Each session, I present a specific bird’s life-history using Museum carvings and descriptions of physical attributes and adaptations, seasonal behaviors, habitat resources for food and nest building, territorial and courtship behaviors, brooding to fledging highlights, and challenges for migrants and year-round residents.

The hour includes plenty of show and tell, with models, charts, images, nests and eggs, feathers and foods, as well as recorded vocalizations, bird lore and literature. The atmosphere is welcoming and conversational. Hearing reminiscences of the connections we’ve each made to birds while growing up and delving into current conservation issues enhances our enjoyment. It is a pleasure to take a bit of Bob’s show on-the-road to share with enthusiastic, never-too-old-to-learn senior birders!

— Allison Gergely 



Thank you volunteers and friends for...

... trail and tree work; garden love and maintenance; volunteering indoors, outdoors, and at events; bird feeding and recording; giving programs; and supporting our mission myriad ways!

- » Abi and Morgan Barnes
- » Ariel McKnight Burgess
- » Alex Kunglungian
- » Anne Dannenberg
- » Barbara Forauer
- » Ben Wang and Vermont Commons School students
- » Brenda Waters
- » Brian, Owen and Hunter Werneke and their friend Ian
- » Charlie Frazier and the Sherman Hollow Road neighbors
- » Danielle Palm
- » Deb Miller
- » Debbie Duvall
- » Dick Affolter
- » Dick Allen
- » Elizabeth and Pat Spinney
- » Erny and Darlene Palola
- » Ginger Lubkowitz
- » Hank Kaestner
- » Ingrid Riga Rhind
- » Jane Vossler
- » Jim Osborn
- » John Gergely
- » John Padua and Cobble Creek Nursery
- » Kari Jo Spear
- » Levi and Steve Smith
- » Linda and Kerry Hurd
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- » Mike Kessler
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- » Norman and Dorothy Pellett
- » Peter Bailey
- » Rachel Fallon
- » Rita Sloan
- » Sally Matthews
- » Shawn Rouleau and Vermont Center for Technology, Essex
- » Shirley and Bob Johnson
- » Staci Pomeroy and Vicki LeDuc
- » the friends and family of Charlotte Leach Donlon
- » the Green Mountain Woodcarvers
- » Van Talmage

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

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SAVE THE DATES

December 1	Richmond Holiday Market
Mid-December	Call to Artists for 2019
February 15-18	Great Backyard Bird Count
February 16	Woodcarving Workshop
<i>Last Saturdays</i>	Bird Monitoring Walks
<i>Various Days</i>	Series for Seniors Project Feederwatch Christmas Bird Count

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

Quick Notes: Volunteer opportunities abound!
Check out our updated website, too.

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

Please send comments or changes of address to

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900 Sherman Hollow Road • Huntington, VT 05462
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Newsletter supported in part by

 **DELTA DENTAL**

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.

Northeast Delta Dental