

# Chip Notes

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE BIRDS OF VERMONT MUSEUM  
Volume 33

Spring – Summer 2019



## STUDENTS GROW COMMUNITY

### *Volunteering and Learning*

During this academic year, a group of students has come once a month to the Birds of Vermont Museum. In their own words:



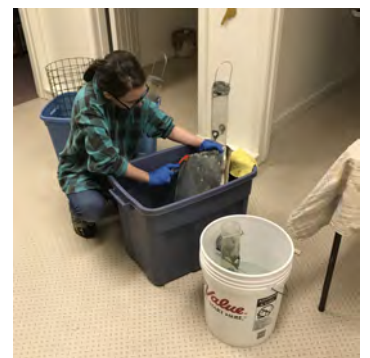
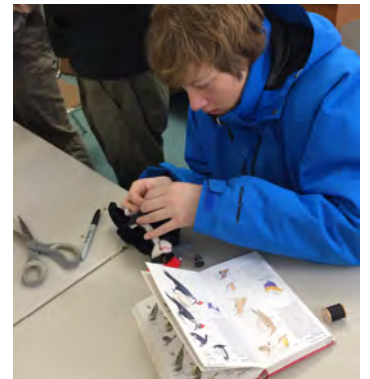
We are from Vermont Commons School in South Burlington, Vermont. Our school places a great emphasis on global responsibility, alongside academics. We believe that our world is not only our home, but our duty to maintain. Our group consists of 7th through 10th graders and our teacher Ben Wang, who all want to make a difference in our community.

We arrived at the Birds of Vermont Museum in the fall as the leaves started to turn and the museum was abuzz with visitors. The land, along with the museum, went into a quieter, dormant mode as winter deepened. As spring arrives, the woods are coming alive and the museum itself is full of expectancy for its opening. To have been able to participate in physical activities, all part of this yearly cycle, has been the epitome of what experiential education really means.

During our time here at the Birds of Vermont Museum, we have contributed in several diverse areas. A few jobs that we have helped with are feeding the birds, weeding the pond edge, taking inventory for the shop, upkeeping the trails, and countless other tasks. We have learned in great depth, not only about the inner workings of museums and the intricacies of birds, but of what it truly means to be a community-oriented citizen.

— *Sophie Dodds, Ethan Geiger, Talia Gibbs, Finnegan McGowan, Henry Van Guilder-Nellis, Anouk Von Bernewitz, Zachary Bushey, and Guinivere Wilson, with Ben Wang*

Thank you to all the Vermont Commons student volunteers and their teacher!



## THE CARVER'S DAUGHTER

### *Part 17: Volcanic Mud*

My father always had a calm, quiet, dignified air about him. Except, of course, when he didn't.

One late February day, as we were driving up Sherman Hollow Road to spend a Saturday together, we noticed the road was getting muddy. Well, I noticed the car starting to sink; he was looking out the window at the treetops for an early robin. We made it through the soft spot all right, and I didn't think any more about it. The day kept getting warmer and warmer, and I was happy to find a spot on Gale's old stone wall in the sun and relax while my father kept an eye out for returning bluebirds and Gale pattered in her garden. (I couldn't be trusted not to pull up an early perennial. Birds I have a grasp of. Plants, forget it.)

But then, suddenly, my father lowered his binoculars. "Someone's stuck," he said, and there was a strange quality to his voice I'd never heard before. It sounded almost like eagerness.

I couldn't hear a thing, but my father was so in tune with the resonance of the dirt road that he could sense a vehicle in distress long before the sound of spinning tires became audible to the rest of us. We went inside to look up the number of a tow truck company and the number of the town office to report the trouble, and I suddenly realized my father hadn't followed us in. I looked out the window to see him going down the road on his tractor.

"Going" might be the wrong word. "Gallop" was closer. I had no idea that old tractor could go so fast. And my father—well, if he'd been wearing a cowboy hat, he would have been waving it over his head. As it was, I thought I heard him shout, "Yippee!" over the engine. He was out of sight before I could tell for sure. Mystified, I followed in his wake down the road. He let me catch up and hop on the back of the tractor, and then we were off at full steam to the soft spot in the road.

It had turned into a full-fledged mud wallow. Not a mud bog that people play in with their four-wheel drives. This was mud at its natural muddiest. Deep, viscous tire tracks were filled with chocolate water. Fresh mud boiled upward like lava from the depths of the earth. Mud that would suck you down one limb at a time, never to be seen again.

In the middle of the thickest part was a red sports car that looked well on its way to becoming part of Sherman



*My father's Farmall tractor*

Hollow forever. It wasn't stuck up to its axles, it was mired to its side mirrors. The driver, a young man, stuck his head out the window and shouted, "I'm being swallowed alive!"

"You'd better get off here," my father said over his shoulder to me. "Stay clear."

Like I had any desire to get any closer to what made quicksand look like a sandbox. I dismounted and found a safe perch on a boulder up near the treeline. My father turned the tractor around and got a chain out of his tool box. I thought he had planned to throw a line to the hapless driver and pull him out the window before the car was fully submerged and never seen again. But no. My father backed the tractor right into the mud!

I leapt to my feet in horror. My father got down off the seat. I thought I'd never see him again. How was I ever going to tell Gale that he was probably in China now? Granted, he'd certainly pick up some birds for his lifelist, but still! Through the Earth's core was not the way to get there.

But no. He waded in, treading from the crest of one rut to the next. When he reached the car, he reached down into the goop and hooked his chain to something, then strode back to the tractor and swung up into the saddle. The expression on his face as he gunned the tractor into gear was absolutely gleeful.

***The Carver’s Daughter***

*continued from page 2*

The engine roared deep in its throat. One big back tire spun and mud shot up in an arc, plastering the windshield of the sports car. The tractor’s front tires started to pick up off the ground. I screamed. But then the tractor found its stride and strove forward, the car fishtailing behind like a kite in the wind. My father crouched forward, both hands on the wheel, head turned over his shoulder, riding the tractor like a bronco and shouting directions to the young man in the car.

The mud fought valiantly to hold its prey, long tentacles of slime bursting into the air like jets of magma. But no matter how many found their target, my father and the tractor were invincible. It was as though they were rewriting gravity itself, putting Newton to shame. Even Einstein would need to rethink his theory of relativity.

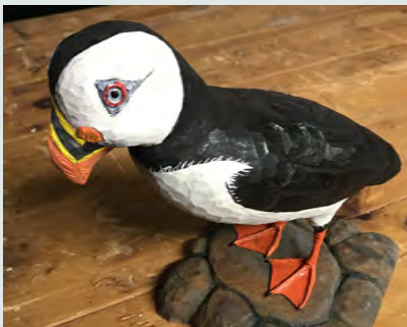
Finally, with a last, sucking shudder, the mud admitted defeat. The tractor and car burst free. The mud shrank

into an evil pool, pulling a cloak of deceptive innocence over its surface to await its next victim.

My father stopped the tractor and got down. The young man got out of his now-black sports car and shook my father’s hand, clearly grateful for his life. I would have been a quivering, shaking mess, but the young man was actually laughing and nodding and looking with great respect at the old tractor as my father coiled up the chain. Together, they turned back to survey the mud, and I could hear them replaying the scene, complete with broad gestures and lots of nods. The spatters on their clothing were like badges of bravery.

I stayed on my rock until they were done and my father looked around for me. Clearly, he’d forgotten I was even there. He gestured for me to get back on the tractor, which was now completely coated with a slime that

*... continued on page 5*



**Carving Report**

Since our last newsletter, we’ve had one-day workshops to carve Holiday Puffins and Chickadees. Both classes were packed. These classes fill so rapidly that we’ve needed waitlists! We’ve been hosting these quarterly, but are adding more sessions to fill the demand. (See *Events*, page 4)

The Green Mountain Woodcarvers annual show will be Saturday, August 17, in Waterbury. They are hosting a 3-day class with Dave Tuttle, carving a Puffin. If you’re interested in signing up, please email Barbara Taylor at [brwoodtaylor@comcast.net](mailto:brwoodtaylor@comcast.net).



***Thank you, volunteers and friends***

- » Ann Day
- » Barbara Elliott and the Town of Huntington
- » Bob and Shirley Johnson
- » Brian Machanic
- » Dave Tuttle and the Green Mountain Woodcarvers
- » Erny and Darlene Palola
- » Kate Schubart
- » Magnus Stien
- » Raven Davis
- » Vicki LeDuc and Staci Pomeroy
- » Front Desk Volunteers
- » Spring Work Day Volunteers
- » Winter Volunteers

***Remembering Volunteer Ken Lucy, 1930 – 2018***

Ken started volunteering for the Museum almost 15 years ago. He worked on trails, helped with raking, and brought us numerous caterpillars to identify. He was passionate about Monarch Conservation and always had a joke, terrible pun, or silly riddle to share.

As he reached his mid 80’s, his outdoor work slowed down, but he continued to visit to share chocolate, chuckles, and wildlife sightings.

Thank you Ken, and RIP. We miss you.





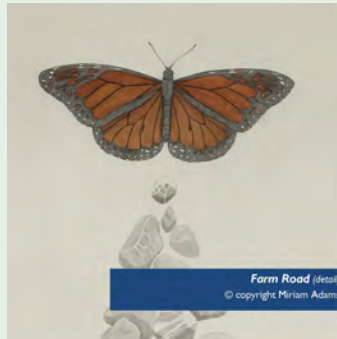
## EVENTS

### POLLINATE THIS! ART SHOW

Daily, May – October

Our 2019 art exhibit seeks to explore, examine, and express pollination—metaphorical and otherwise. Does it inspire you to change your garden, grow your art, share curiosity?

*Included with admission*



### EARLY BIRDER MORNING WALKS

Sundays, May – June • 7:00 – 9:00am

All birders welcome on our late-spring weekly walks. Explore trails, hear and see birds. Coffee and conversation afterwards. Please bring your own binoculars.

*Free, donations welcome*

### NESTLINGS FIND NATURE

2nd and 4th Tuesdays, May – October • 10:30 – 11:30am

What is pollen? What is pollination? Who, what and where are pollinators? Outside and inside, kids explore, predict, and create.

For 4–8 year olds • *Included with admission*

### BLUES AND BIRDS

Friday, June 21 • 2:00 – 5:00pm

The Museum and the Vermont Blues Society invite you to share and celebrate Make Music Day. Bring voices, guitars, and percussion to welcome summer with song.

All ages and abilities welcome • Bring snacks and water  
*Outdoors*

### RAVEN CARVING CLASS



Saturday, June 22 • 9:30am – 3:30pm

Carve and paint a Raven in a one-day carving class. Wood blank, paint, snacks, and coffee included.

*\$30 members, \$40 non-members*

*All levels, Limit: 10 • Must pre-register*

### BIRD MONITORING WALKS

Last Saturdays, June 29, July 27, and more • 7:30 – 9:00am

All birders welcome on the monthly monitoring walk, outdoors on the Museum's trails, through forest and meadow. Coffee and conversation afterwards. Please bring your own binoculars.

*Free, donations welcome*

### POLLINATE THIS! ART RECEPTION

Thursday, July 11 • 3:00 – 5:00pm

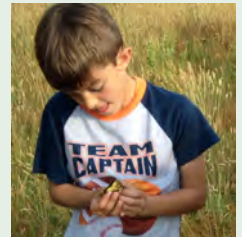
Meet artists, enjoy cool drinks (non-alcoholic), admire art, discuss conservation, and relax in our pollinator sanctuaries.

*Donations welcome*

### BUTTERFLY and BUG WALK

Sunday, July 14 • 10am – 12pm

Join Vermont Entomological Society naturalists and entomologists for an exploratory stroll on the Museum grounds. Bring binoculars, magnifying glass, and an insect net if you have one.



*Free, donations welcome*

### PAINT AND SIP

with **ARIEL MCKNIGHT BURGESS**

Thursday, August 15 • 5:30 – 7:30pm

Huntington River Vineyard

Be moved to create on a lovely summer evening. Come with a friend. Fun for adults and older children (must be 21 or older to drink wine).

*Pre-registration required • 5 painters minimum • Max 15 \$30 members, \$35 non-members (includes 1 glass of wine)*

### LOOKING FORWARD

July • *Pollinator Gardening* display at Williston Library

July 4 • *Closed* for the Holiday

August • *Invasive Plants* display at Richmond Library;  
*Migration* display at Stowe Library

August 28 • *The Turkey Vultures of Bristol*

September 14 • *Otter Carving Class* with Dave Tuttle

October 6 • *Nature Printing* with Coleen O'Connell

October 19 • *Science, Art, and Comics* workshop with Rosemary Mosco

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 3

looked carcinogenic. I shook my head and set out for the house along the edge of the nice, safe woods. The black sports car headed up the road, dripping clods of muck behind it for half a mile.

Back at Gale's house, I returned to my spot on the wall in the sun and settled down with a book. But before my father could hose off the tractor, he pricked up his ears, turned back toward the road, and then, without a word, he and the tractor galloped back toward the pool of brimstone.

He didn't come back for the rest of the afternoon. I knew he was all right because every fifteen minutes or so, a car dripping mud would come up the road. The driver would wave at me, and once someone rolled down her window and called, "Your father wants to know if you want to come and watch?"

I made the face that I would have made if someone had given me boiled spinach when I'd asked for ice cream.

"That's what he said you'd do!" the woman called back. "But I've never seen him so happy! What is it about boys and mud?"

"I have utterly no idea," I said.

At last the sound of a truck dumping gravel into the hole to Hades reached my perch on the wall. Soon after, my father and his faithful tractor made their way back up the road. I was honestly surprised he hadn't waited to make sure the town truck didn't need to get pulled out. But when he finally came back to the house, mostly mud himself, he looked a little crestfallen.



*My father's Farmall tractor—a more intimidating view!*

"What's wrong?" I asked him. "I thought you were having a wonderful day."

"Oh, I was," he said quickly. "It's just—well—it's all filled in now. I was kinda hoping to see what my car would do with it when it was time to take you home. It's all about where you put your tires, you know? I think we could have made it."

Then he laughed at my expression, and I realized he'd gotten me, again.

— *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/>

### *Capital Steps*

We're pleased to report more good changes at the Museum. Your support makes these things happen, so *Thank you!*

- » Low-flow toilets (installed in October—a drought-inspired upgrade)
- » New carpet in the Museum lobby, stairs, and Raptor Gallery (2017-2018)
- » Repairing some plow damage to one of the upper pollinator sanctuaries
- » Incredible improvements to trails by dedicated volunteers, including better signage
- » New entrance sign
- » Third-year of pollinator sanctuary plantings completed
- » Kiosks built and installed by Center for Technology Essex



# POLLINATE THIS!

*art inspiring seeds of conservation*

We wander in gardens, foster habitats, explore ecosystems. Life buzzes, entwines, fosters, interacts—one species to another and another and another. Birds and insects and plants thrive together. Can we pause, notice? Can we let the outside in, become as intimately connected to the world around as a pollinated plant is to its pollinators?



Our 2019 art exhibit, *Pollinate This!* seeks to explore, examine, and express pollination—metaphorical and otherwise. Does it inspire you to change your garden, grow your art, share curiosity?



We are pleased to showcase the works of both new and returning artists and photographers: Andrew Keim, BJ (Betty Wood) Gray, Bryan Richheimer, Carol McDowell, Claudette Eaton, Dave Marcotte, Deana Allgaier, Deb Sharpe, Heidi Lyon, Isla Hays Lothrop, Janet Labelle, Jerry Lasky, Judy Welna, Juniper & Prudence Murray, Katherine Guttman, Katrina Dreamer, Katherine Moran, Kristi Wilkinson, Laurie Jane Beppler, Lori Hinrichsen, Louanne Nielsen, Mariposa Ottens, Miriam Adams, Monique M Dewyea, Nancy Stone, Paula Kelley, Rich Kelley, Kimberly Sultze & Jon Hyde, Rebecca Rouiller, Rebecca Rosenthal, Tina Valentinetti, and Trine Wilson.

The show runs from May 1 to October 31 in the Birds of Vermont Museum. The Museum is open daily, from 10am to 4pm, during these months. There will be a reception/meet the artists on July 11 at 3pm.

Art shown here:

*Milkweed Macro* (Trine Wilson); *Evening Pollination* (Rebecca Rosenthal), and *Sunflower Bee* (Dean Allgaier)



## 2019 Raffle!

Donated by Vicki LeDuc, we're offering a lovely cross-stitch wall hanging as our 2019 Raffle prize. The full-color wall hanging is approximately 3 feet wide and a bit taller than it is wide.

To enter the raffle, photocopy or cut out this ticket, fill it out, and send it in with **\$1 to enter**. Or send 6 (six) tickets in with \$5, for extra chances to win!



Send your ticket to  
 Birds of Vermont Museum, attn. raffle  
 900 Sherman Hollow Road  
 Huntington, Vermont 05462



## 2019 Birds of Vermont Museum Raffle

Your Name:

Address:

Phone / Email:

*Please be sure we can read your writing. Thanks!*





## BEYOND BIRDS:

### *Amphibian Research at the Museum*

Lauren Ash has been visiting the pond at the Birds of Vermont Museum every year since 2016, as part of her research as a Biology Ph.D. student at the University of Vermont. She is testing for ranavirus. Ranaviruses are a group of pathogens that can infect multiple species of amphibians, reptiles, and fish. Amphibians are particularly vulnerable to infection, with one study reporting that the most common cause of amphibian mortality events in the US was infection by ranavirus (Green et al. 2002).

To test for virus, Ash and her team catch up to 30 amphibians of any species at any life stage during each visit to our pond. They collect tissue samples (either a portion of the tail or toe), and release the individuals back into the pond. After testing tissue samples collected in 2016 and 2017, her data suggest that of the 186 samples from the Museum property, three have tested positive for ranavirus. Two were from 2016 (an adult newt and a gray tree frog metamorph) and one was from 2017 (adult newt).

Ash normally tests each sample twice at the same time to reduce error: each of these only tested positive for one out of the two replicates, so it is possible that they are false positives or extremely low amounts of virus. However, a handful of additional ponds around Vermont have tested positive for ranavirus. The presence of virus can vary from year to year.

The researchers caught amphibians in the Museum's pond using aquatic dip nets. They would catch for 45 minutes or up to 30 individuals. Individual amphibians



were kept in separate bags or containers. Pictured is an adult Eastern Newt (*Notophthalmus viridescens*) in a bag. In addition to a few other species and life stages, they caught tadpoles, metamorphs, and adults of Green Frogs.

To help prevent transmission between ponds, they would scrub off the mud and vegetation on their boots and waders after visiting any wetland area. Spraying or soaking them with a 10% bleach solution or letting them sit in the sun for 24 hours is enough to kill the virus. You can visit <https://www.ranavirus.org> for more information.

A student of Ash's has received funding to conduct a project analyzing already collected samples for chytrid, another amphibian infection.



### References

Green DE, Converse KA, Schrader AK (2002) Epizootiology of sixty four amphibian morbidity and mortality events in the USA, 1996-2001. *Ann NY Acad Sci* 969: 323-339.



**Birds of Vermont Museum**  
900 Sherman Hollow Road  
Huntington, Vermont 05462  
[www.birdsofvermont.org](http://www.birdsofvermont.org)

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### SAVE THE DATES

*Sundays in June* Early Birders Morning Walks

June 21 Blues & Birds  
June 22 Raven Carving Class  
July 11 *Pollinate This!* reception  
July 14 Butterfly & Bug Walk  
August 15 Paint and Sip at the Vineyard  
September 14 Otter Carving Class  
October 9 Nature Printing  
October 13 the Big Sit!  
October 19 Science, Art & Comics  
*with Rosemary Mosco*  
*Last Saturdays* Bird Monitoring Walks

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

*Volunteers always needed*

*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.*

### Board of Trustees 2019

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*Please send comments or changes of address to*

Birds of Vermont Museum  
900 Sherman Hollow Road • Huntington, VT 05462  
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