



**Missisquoi Matters**

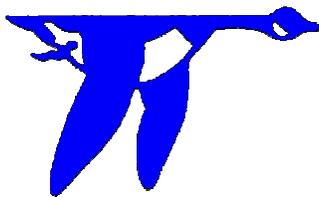
is the quarterly newsletter of the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated to promoting a better awareness, appreciation, conservation, and responsible utilization of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

29 Tabor Road, Swanton, VT 05488  
 (802) 868-4781 ext 121  
[www.friendsofmissisquoi.org](http://www.friendsofmissisquoi.org)

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 Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

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- Rich Kelley *Vice President*
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- Joe Belanger
- Ken Copenhaver
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- Ken Sturm *Refuge Manager*
- Dave Frisque *Park Ranger*
- Judy Edwards *Wildlife Biologist*
- Eddie Edwards  
*Zone Enforcement Officer*
- Lisa Swainbank  
*Office Administrative Assistant*
- Joe Bertrand  
*Maintenance Mechanic*

MNWR HQ hours are  
 Monday thru Friday  
 8:00am – 4:30pm  
 Saturdays May 19 to Oct 27  
 10:00 am – 2:00 pm

**“Giving Goose” Painting Unveiled**

If you’ve visited the refuge headquarters in the past few months, you’ve been greeted by an impressive display as you walk in the door.

On International Migratory Bird Day, The Friends of Missisquoi was pleased to unveil our “Giving Goose” display. We feel this is a great way to recognize significant donations to the Refuge. The highlight, and obvious focal point, is a nearly 25-square foot painting, titled “Blue Goose Marsh.” The painting was generously donated by local artist Paule Gingras, whose other work is currently on display throughout the refuge building as part of our featured local artist display.



Along the top of the painting is a flock of 50 brass geese. These geese, patterned after the National Wildlife Refuge System logo, will be engraved with a commemorative message honoring donors, or memorial donations, to the refuge and Friends organization. The Friends’ Board of Directors has set a minimum donation of \$350 for a goose.

The leader of the flock has been engraved with the name of Mr. & Mrs. Eugene Fries. The Fries are the parents of former Friends director Christine Sweeny and parents-in-law of retired Refuge Manager Mark Sweeny. Memorial contributions made at the time of Mr. Fries’ passing were used to fund the initial design and fabrication of the geese.

The plaque at the base of the painting reads, **“What a country chooses to save is what a country says about itself.”** This is a quote from Mollie Beattie, who was a University of Vermont graduate and the first woman director of the Fish & Wildlife Service.

**FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**

**Bimonthly Board Meeting**

**Tuesday, July 10, 2012 at 6:30 pm**

**At the Refuge Headquarters**

Members are always welcome to attend.

Come and see what the board is planning and contribute your ideas.

Next meeting: September 11, 2012 at 6:30 pm

## Spring and Summer Update

*by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR*

It was just about one year ago that I visited the area for the first time making plans for my transfer to the Missisquoi NWR. What a difference a year makes! I recall visiting the headquarters facility and remarking that there was a great waterfowl unit across the road (now full of bobolinks!) and seeing carp spawning on the Maquam/Black Creek trail! The floods of 2011 were unprecedented, and it was definitely a strange time for me to move into my new role and learn about the refuge under such unusual conditions.

The year has passed quickly for me and it has been exciting to see the spring unfold, evidenced by the unfurling of leaves and fiddle heads in the flood plain forests and the return of migratory birds. Spring and summer are great times to visit the refuge and I encourage everyone to get out and enjoy the great trails and boating available here!

The Refuge staff has been quite busy during the late winter and spring completing many routine maintenance tasks, compiling survey and monitoring data collected last year, and organizing and leading public walks and educational events.

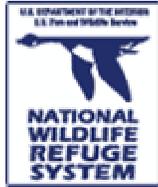
A highlight of the winter's activities was moving about 900 tons of rip rap rock across the Missisquoi River over an ice bridge engineered by Maintenance Mechanic Joe Bertrand. The rock will be used to secure and protect an eroding cultural site on the refuge. By working long hours on weekends and in the evenings when temperatures were coldest, Joe built up an average of 16 inches of ice across the river at Mac's Bend, enough to allow us to move 15 tons of rock at a time. We hope to be able to move the remainder of the rock this fall and winter utilizing the refuge barge and possibly another ice bridge. Stay tuned.

There has been much work centered on the new Eagle Point Unit of the refuge located in Derby,

Vermont. This parcel will be managed by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department under a cooperative agreement with the USFWS. Refuge and State staff have met repeatedly throughout the winter and spring to discuss public use and habitat management of the tract. We were successful in competing for a \$20,000.00 grant to hire a crew from the Student Conservation Association. They will develop a public use trail and other facilities at Eagle Point this summer. Key to the grant's success was direct monetary support from the Friends of Missisquoi NWR and the Lake Memphremagog Watershed Association. We thank the Friends and the Watershed Association for their support!

Outreach and education events have been regular at the refuge, especially during the spring. Our Park Ranger, Dave Frisque, has been busy conducting vernal pool and woodcock walks, meeting college classes for wetland education, and ensuring that the refuge classroom is utilized by home school and technical groups. And of course the Friends have been right there providing the dedicated bird and nature walks which have begun gaining increased attendance in recent months. These walks are so important to garner support and interest in the refuge and the environment, and it is heartening to know that we have the commitment from our Friends and volunteers to provide this opportunity for the public.

I could continue but the list just keeps going. The change between last year and this year has been stark for me, and I look forward to learning more about the refuge and it's community (both wildlife and human!) in the coming year. The summer looks to be a busy one with less staff available to help with biology and maintenance needs than previous years. Nonetheless we have lots of biological and public use projects and programs planned for the season, so please stop in to find out what has been happening at Missisquoi NWR whenever you can!



## Summer Activities Schedule at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

29 Tabor Rd.  
Swanton, VT 05488

**All programs and tours are free, but registration is required where noted.**

### **Ditch Pickle Classic**                      **Saturday and Sunday, July 14 & 15, 6:00 am to approx 9:00 pm**

The Ditch Pickle Classic is taking place on July 14 and 15 on Lake Champlain and is supported by the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. All proceeds from the event are donated to the Friends of Missisquoi, who supports this great event. So what's a "Ditch Pickle" you may ask? A Ditch Pickle is a slang term for a Largemouth Bass, and these guys are catching them using fly tackle. The Ditch Pickle Classic is Lake Champlain's exclusive Catch-Photo-Release bass fishing tournament, and is fly fishing only. This is a great way to learn about warm water fly fishing. Both local and national sponsors have graciously donated prizes. The organizers of the event are Chris Lynch and Mike Kontos from Green Mountain Troutfitters; Brendan Hare, a UVM grad student; and Brian Price and Ken Capsey from Vermont Fly Guys. This is a friendly and fun tournament, and all are welcome to participate! To learn more you can visit the Ditch Pickle Classic web page at <http://www.dpcvt.com/> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/DitchPickleClassic>

### **Annual Kids Fishing Derby**                      **Saturday, July 28, 8:00 am to about 1:00 pm**

More information will be available as the date approaches.  
Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this popular annual event.

### **Refuge Canoe and Kayak Trip**                      **Sunday, July 29th, 8:45 am to about 2:00 pm**

**Members only:** Join Friends board members Carol Yarnell and Russ Ford as we explore the history and ecology of the Missisquoi Delta by canoe and kayak. Meet at Louie's Landing on Route 78. Our route will be determined by weather and river level. We may have a limited amount of space for anyone unable to provide their own boat, paddle, and pfd. **This is the Friends' Summer members-only program. Please call Russ at 802 848-7303 to register for this event.**

### **Dedication of the Eagle Point Unit of Missisquoi NWR**                      **Friday, August 10**

Time of day to be determined.

### **Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training Program**                      **Saturday, August 18, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm**

Please call 802-868-4781 for more information and to register for this event.

### **Volunteer Recognition Dinner**                      **Friday, Sept. 21, 6:00 to 10:00 pm**

A special dinner is being planned to recognize everyone who has volunteered at the refuge over the past two years. More information will be available as we get closer to this event.

### **Refuge Open House**                      **Saturday, October 13**

Mark your calendar now! More information will be available as we get closer to this event.

**Art Exhibit****Through June 30**

Paintings by Paule Gingras are on display at the refuge headquarters from now until the end of June. And don't miss her wonderful painting of Blue Goose Marsh. (See Giving Goose Project article on first page.)

To check for any schedule changes or additions, visit the Friends website at [www.friendsofmissisquoi.org](http://www.friendsofmissisquoi.org) and check the "What's Happening" section.

**Monthly Nature Walks****1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of each month, 9:00 am to 11:00 am**

Join Friends of Missisquoi NWR board member Joe Belanger for nature walks on various refuge trails, held the first Saturday of each month. Registration is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

**June 2: Stephen Young Marsh Trail.** Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge headquarters and across the road from the marsh.

**July 7: Maquam/Black Creek Trail.** Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.

**August 4: Old Railroad Passage Trail.** Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge headquarters and across from Stephen Young Marsh.

**Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks****3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month, 8:00 am to 10:00 am**

Friends board members Bridget Butler and Ken Copenhaver lead bird monitoring walks year-round on various refuge trails on the third Saturday of each month. The purpose of the walks is to gather long-term data on the presence of birds, their abundance, and changes in populations. Observations will be entered into the Vermont eBird database where data is stored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. These walks are appropriate for all levels of birders and provide a wonderful opportunity to learn about birds throughout the seasons. Registration is not required. **After 27 months of walks we have recorded 109 species of birds.** The schedule for the next three months is:

**June 16: Old Railroad Passage Trail.** Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge headquarters and across from Stephen Young Marsh.

**July 21: Maquam/Black Creek Trail.** Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.

**August 18: Jeep Trail.** Meet at the Louie's Landing boat access area. We will drive in to the trail head at Mac's Bend.

**Volunteers Needed for Book Store**

The Friends board is looking for one or more volunteers to help with the Friends Book Store. The goal is to increase the number of hours per week that the store is open, especially in the summer when the refuge has its most visitors. Volunteers may also assist in ordering merchandise for the store. The store is the Friends second-largest source of revenue, after membership dues. If you think you would be interested in helping, please contact Paul Madden at [paulmadden88@gmail.com](mailto:paulmadden88@gmail.com). Paul will give you information on what is required and how you can get started! Thank you.

## That Old Black Magic?

by Judy Sefchick Edwards,  
Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

What is sleek and black, smells a little fishy, and disappears in a flash? Why, it's the nesting cormorants at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. Love them or hate them, double-crested cormorants are pulling a fast one this year...literally.

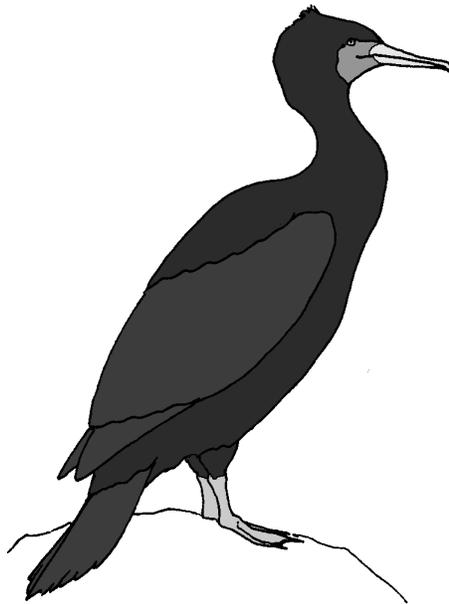
It started out as a perfectly predictable nesting season at the Shad and Metcalfe Island Rookery: great blue herons arrived first as usual, in mid-March, to set up nests, while cormorants arrived three weeks later. Observations at the rookery during the week of April 23 showed that all was well; cormorants and herons were flying overhead, more than one hundred nests were occupied by great blue herons, and at least twenty-five cormorants were sitting on or near nests.

But by April 30, less than a week later, something had changed, and what I *didn't* see surprised me. Although the great blue herons were still on their nests, the cormorants were g-o-n-e. Now you see them...now you don't? With no cormorants seen or heard and all their nests empty, the rookery was no longer black-and-blue!

A quick phone call to some state and federal counterparts revealed that this wasn't a Missisquoi phenomenon—the same thing was being observed at rookeries throughout Lake Champlain. The question on everyone's mind was, "Where did the cormorants go?" After all, double-crested cormorants have been nesting in the Lake Champlain Basin since 1981. Due to their exploding population, cormorants have been controlled, to reduce reproduction and slow population growth, on some Lake Champlain islands since 1999.

Annual monitoring has been done at Shad and Metcalfe Islands since 1999 to determine the rookery's size and composition and to observe nesting cormorants. During the thirteen years of monitoring, between 150 and 581 great blue heron nests have occurred at the rookery annually, with most nests successfully producing fledglings (young that can fly).

Although no cormorant control measures have been implemented at Missisquoi, cormorant nests have fluctuated between 27 and 172 annually during this time, but most of their nests (93% overall) have failed to produce young. During six of the monitoring years, no cormorant fledglings were produced, and in 6 other years, just 2% to 11% of cormorant nests were successful. The only real triumph for cormorants came in 2009, when 38 of their nests successfully produced fledglings. In total, 86 cormorant nests have been successful at Missisquoi during the thirteen years of monitoring.



Though small numbers of nesting cormorants have been found on a few Lake Champlain island rookeries this year, the contentious cormorant caper is far from being explained. Did cormorants continue north on the St. Lawrence into Canada this year? Has the cormorant population decreased due to disease or some other factor? Will the typical influx of non-breeding cormorants into Lake Champlain in June bring late-breeding cormorants this year? Is Champ somehow responsible? Enquiring minds need to know....

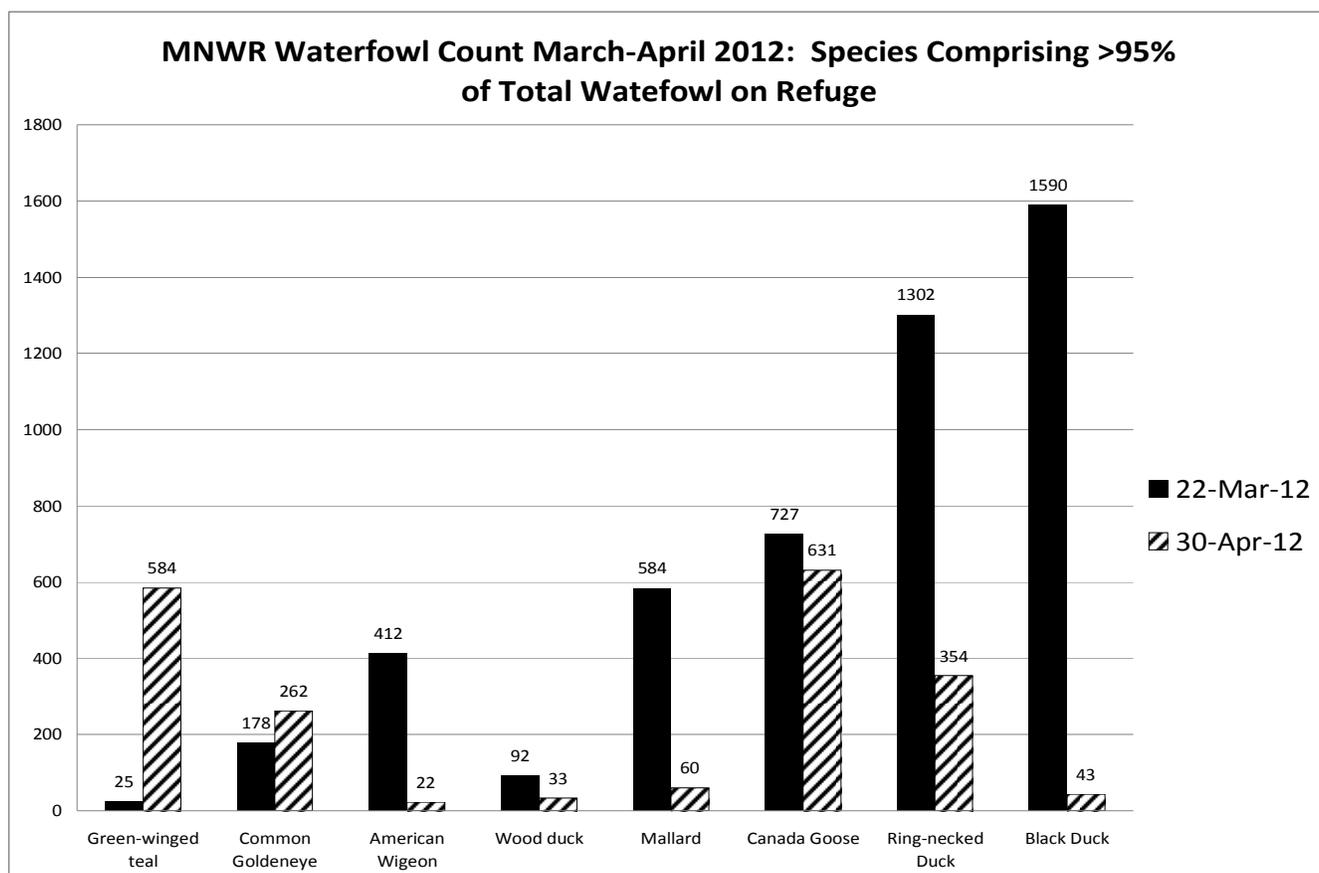
Hopefully we'll find some clues to determine what caused this year's double-crested cormorant disappearing act at Missisquoi's rookery, as well as at other rookeries on Lake Champlain. Abracadabra, hocus-pocus, or was it that old black magic? We may never know.

## Who's Using the Refuge?

*by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR*

In the Atlantic Flyway (Florida to Maine), the Lake Champlain Valley is an important north-south corridor for migrating birds, especially waterfowl. The wetlands at Missisquoi NWR are a crucial link, providing feeding and resting habitat for waterfowl that are moving between their southern wintering areas and northern breeding grounds, in both the U.S. and Canada.

A basic question at the refuge is, "Who's using the refuge?" To help answer this, refuge-wide waterfowl surveys were done on March 22, and April 30, 2012, to determine the number of waterfowl, and what species of waterfowl, were using the refuge this spring. During the survey, a two-person team of observers, using binoculars, in a shallow-water Go-Devil boat, counted waterfowl as they flushed throughout the refuge. It's not as easy as it sounds—with hundreds of birds flying in the air, some hiding in vegetation, and all of them desperately trying to get away from you, the count is really a best estimation of what's actually out there.



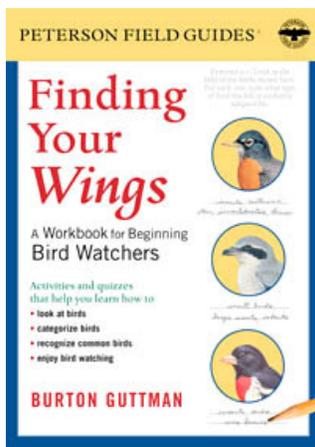
Results of the surveys show that, by the end of March, the spring waterfowl migration was in full swing at Missisquoi. Waterfowl numbered 5,092 on the refuge, with black ducks, ring-necked ducks, Canada geese, and mallards being the most numerous. By late April, far fewer (2,039) ducks and geese were observed, since most of the migrating waterfowl, especially black ducks and ring-necked ducks, already had moved through the area. Some of the mallards, wood ducks, Canada geese, and common goldeneyes will make the refuge their summertime home; but most of the waterfowl moving northward through Missisquoi will just wine and dine here, and then be on their way.

# The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS    GAMES    GIFTS    TEE SHIRTS    HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors



## Peterson Field Guides: Finding Your Wings

### A Workbook for Beginning Bird Watchers

Burton Guttman

**\$ 14.95**, spiralbound

206 pages, 7 1/4 x 10  
full-color photographs, full-color illustrations, b&w illustrations

**A step-by-step workbook that guides readers through the challenges of enjoying bird watching**

Burton Guttman firmly believes that people learn best by doing. No other book for beginning bird watchers involves the reader so actively in the exciting first steps of learning to watch birds. This workbook is filled with quizzes and exercises that prepare the reader for going birding and help beginners develop a sense of accomplishment and progress. With each chapter covering a different aspect of bird watching, the author guides readers along a threefold path: learning how to really see birds, how to sort birds by category, and how to learn the easiest birds first. Exercises include analyzing what types of food birds' bills are adapted for and sketching the shapes of birds in different categories. Quiz questions ask readers to identify what type of duck feeds by tipping its rear end up in the air and extending its neck downward, or to identify a small brownish bird clinging to a weed stalk and picking out seeds. Plenty of room is provided for writing and sketching, and answers are supplied in the back of the book.

### Store Order Form

To order by phone, call 802-868-4781. To order by mail, fill out this order form and send to:  
The Friends' Store MNWR, 29 Tabor Rd, Swanton, VT 05488  
Please add \$6.00 shipping and handling.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Please send me:  Peterson Field Guides: Finding Your Wings (\$14.95)

Payment: Enclose check or money order, or fill in Credit Card information.

Type of card:  MasterCard     Visa

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