



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.

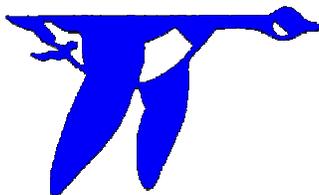
29 Tabor Road, Swanton, VT 05488
(802) 868-4781 ext 121
www.friendsofmissisquoi.org

E-mail: info@friendsofmissisquoi.org

Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

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Office Administrative Assistant
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Maintenance Mechanic

MNWR HQ hours are
Monday thru Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm

Friends Launch New Website

Check out our new and ever-improving website! The completely redesigned site came on-line in October. Parts of it are still under construction, so check in often to see what's new. The address is still www.friendsofmissisquoi.org

We have added several new email addresses for your convenience:

To make comments and suggestions about the website:
website@friendsofmissisquoi.org

To contact board members: board@friendsofmissisquoi.org

To submit photos for use on the website:
photos@friendsofmissisquoi.org

Also check out the Friends Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/friendsofmissisquoi> to learn more about the refuge and coming events. You can also look at, comment on, and share your own photos.



You do not need to have a Facebook account to view the page. Please stop by and let us know what you think!

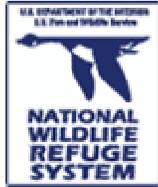
And you can follow us on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/#!/MissisquoiNWR>

About Us

Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge is a nonprofit organization established in 2002 to support the goals and actions of the Refuge and its staff. We are a group of citizens who work together to provide volunteer and financial support to the Refuge.

Among our many activities, we staff the Refuge gift shop, lead monthly bird walks and nature/photography walks, coordinate an Art Exhibit at the Refuge headquarters, offer informational presentations, and maintain a wildlife camera in the forest.

In 2012 we hope to provide the support that will keep the Refuge headquarters open for more hours on the weekends. One of our members will lead us on Frog Walks (we know that she can sing to the frogs and she says that she can talk to the toads). We plan to expand our Art Exhibit, perhaps making it into a year-round feature. And we have other ideas and projects percolating. So join the Friends and be a participant. Who knows what will happen next.



Winter 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.

Owl Prowls

February 25 and March 17, 6:00 pm to approx 9:00 pm

Join refuge volunteer, Jeremy Brooks as he leads a couple of walks in the refuge to seek out and listen to the vocalizations of resident owls in February and March.

- The February walk will be at the Stephen J. Young Marsh Trail located on Tabor Road, 1 mile past the refuge HQ building. Meet at the parking lot at the entrance sign that reads "Refuge Trails Parking."
- The March owl prowls will be at the Black/Maquam Creek Trail located approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton on RT. 78. Look for the large Refuge sign at this parking area.

Please bring along a low intensity flashlight. **Please call 802-868-4781 to register for these activities.**

Monthly Nature Walks

1st Saturday of each month (see times below)

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:

December 3: Maquam/Black Creek Trail (9AM to 11AM) Meet at the parking lot on the south side of Rte 78.

January 7: Jeep Trail (9AM to 12PM) Meet at the Louie's Landing fishing access parking lot.

February 4: Steven Young Marsh Trail (9AM to 11AM) 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

3rd Saturday of each month, 8:00 am to 10:00 am

Friends board members Bridget Butler and Ken Copenhaver will lead bird monitoring walks 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. Locations are subject to change depending on trail conditions.

December 17: Jeep Trail. Meet at the Louie's Landing fishing access parking lot.

January 21: Maquam/Black Creek Trail. Meet at the parking lot on the south side of Rte 78.

February 18: Stephen Young Marsh Trail. Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge headquarters and across from Stephen Young Marsh.

To check for any schedule changes, visit the Friends website at www.friendsofmissisquoi.org and check the "What's Happening" section.

The Eagle Point Unit: New Refuge Property with New Possibilities

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR

As most folks associated with the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge know, in 2010 we were fortunate enough to receive the donation of a 420-acre tract on the shores of Lake Memphremagog near the town of Newport, VT. The property was transferred to the Refuge System by the generous act of Michael Dunn, who declared in his will that his property should be given to the Federal Government to be “held in an open state” and be available to the public to enjoy. Mr. Dunn also willed to the Province of Quebec an adjoining 422 acres on the Canadian side of the border.

The property was officially accepted into the Refuge System at the end of 2010 by way of an environmental assessment that laid out the proposed management of this property as part of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. One key decision on accepting this land was to establish a long-term management relationship with the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department. This partnership was deemed necessary in large part from a purely pragmatic standpoint – the refuge staff could not effectively oversee regular management of this tract from an office an hour and a half away. However, the State has several Wildlife Management Areas nearby and is better situated to have consistent on-the-ground presence. The result: a cooperative management agreement was established, and the Eagle Point Wildlife Management Area at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge was born.



The Eagle Point Unit contains a mix of upland and wetland habitats including northern hardwood forest, hemlock seepage forest, managed grassland, and a diverse wetland complex formed around Hall’s Creek. The property also includes just over a mile of shoreline along Lake Memphremagog, providing a natural undeveloped buffer between the upland areas and aquatic habitat of the lake. A variety of wildlife are known or expected on the tract including common species such as white-tailed deer and wild turkey and less common species of management concern including Bobolink, Northern Harrier, American Black Duck, and bobcat. Wetland communities provide a host of plants identified by the state as rare or sensitive, including mermaid weed and yellow water crowfoot.

Planning is well underway for the future management of this property. The State will lead the planning process with direct consultation of the refuge staff. Current management of the habitat includes maintaining grasslands by delayed mowing and haying for grassland species like Bobolink and Savannah Sparrow. Wetland buffers have been marked and will be managed to protect wetlands and create riparian habitat along Hall’s Creek, important in water quality protection and habitat for wildlife such as waterfowl nesting cover. A full management plan will be developed in the coming year to guide all habitat and wildlife management actions on this property.

Similarly, a public use management plan is being developed to honor Mr. Dunn's wish to ensure the public has continued access to this property once in federal ownership. The refuge has been working with the state to plan a public use trail loop that will showcase the managed grasslands and forested habitat of this property. A grant has been applied for to pay a Student Conservation Association trail crew to construct this trail next summer. As part of the grant, the Friends of Missisquoi NWR have agreed to donate funds to purchase an interpretive panel as part of the overall design of the public use trail system. We will cross our fingers in hopes that the grant can successfully capture the necessary funds to

make the proposed interpretive trail a reality.

The future of this property is still being created through the unique management agreement between the State of Vermont and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. We also plan to engage our Canadian partners who own the other half of this property in a management vision and plan to ensure that the landscape-level picture is not lost over political boundaries. Finally, we must consider the generosity and forethought of Michael Dunn. His property is a great benefit to the conservation of and management for wildlife in Vermont and will surely be appreciated by future generations who visit the Eagle Point Unit of Missisquoi NWR.

Welcome new board members Suzanne Kenyon and Brian Price. Suzanne was voted onto the board at the September meeting, and Brian was voted in at the November meeting. Welcome aboard!

The Friends of the Refuge and the staff at the Refuge will be actively working to improve our partnership and our connections with the surrounding community. This is part of a national effort by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, but it also aligns very well with our local situation--new management at the Refuge and an increasingly active Friends board. We will be meeting in mid-January to begin this discussion.

Please take the time to send suggestions for how the Friends could do a better job in connecting with YOU. We offer bird walks, nature photography walks, informational presentations, Art in the Refuge, a quarterly newsletter, a new website, and more. What else would you like to see the Friends doing? What else could we do that would bring more members of the public onto the Refuge?

Please send your comments and suggestions to: Paul Madden at paulm@friendsofmissisquoi.org

--Paul Madden, President, FMNWR

Notice

Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge board meetings are held six times a year on the second Tuesday of odd-numbered months. Unless notified otherwise, meetings are held at the Refuge Headquarters and start at 6:30 pm. The next two meetings will be:

Tuesday, January 10, 2012, 6:30 pm at the Refuge Headquarters

Tuesday, March 13, 2012, 6:30 pm at the Refuge Headquarters

Members are always welcome to attend meetings. Come and find out what the board is planning and contribute your ideas for the Friends' future.

Oaks Are “OAK-AY” by Me

by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist,
Missisquoi NWR

Walking on the Stephen J. Young Marsh trail, I ask myself, “How has this happened again?” The brilliant colors faded on the forest floor remind me that another fall has come and gone at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. With my mind still firmly planted in summer, it’s comforting to know that oak trees seem to have lost track of the time, too. With dried-up leaves still clinging to their branches, oaks add a dash of muted color to the now almost-winter woods, which is more than okay by me.

In a state where maple is S-T-A-R, it’s sometimes hard to remember other VITs (very important trees) of the forest. With tall trunks, thick rugged bark, and open rounded canopies, oaks are more than just a pretty face—they’re an important, but underrated, component of Vermont’s hardwood and floodplain forests. In fact, oak trees provide food and shelter for much of Vermont’s diverse wildlife, even critters that you may not normally consider.

How can you tell different types of oaks from one another? It’s all in the lobes. An oak belonging to the white oak group (e.g., swamp white oak and white oak, at left) has leaves with rounded lobes, while the red oak group (e.g., red oak and black oak, at right) has pointed lobes. The acorns are different too: white oak acorns mature and drop in one season, while acorns of red oaks take two seasons to mature. When you see a red oak tree surrounded by ripe acorns this fall, you can marvel at the fact that they



started growing more than a year ago. Finally, less tannic acid in the acorns of white oaks is said to make them sweeter than the acorns of red oaks. But don’t take my word for it, ask a squirrel—after all, they’re known to select and eat white acorns first and bury the red oak acorns to eat at a later date!

Remarkably, if they can survive pests, diseases, and chainsaws, oak trees can live 300 years or more. Most oaks need to be at least 20 years old before producing acorns, but not even the healthiest and largest trees can accumulate enough food and energy to produce sizeable acorn crops every year. “Bumper crops” of acorns occur at two- to five-year intervals and it’s only during these years of excessive production that some will survive to become seedlings. Let’s face it, the odds aren’t good—for every 10,000 acorns, only one will become a tree!

Why are oaks important? Each oak tree contains its own miniature ecosystem that many species rely on for survival. It’s a well-known fact that squirrels hide acorns to last them throughout the winter, but did you know that blue jays do this too? In one study, blue jays

removed 54% of the acorn crop in a given area, sometimes burying acorns more than a half mile away from where they originally fell! Other studies have documented that a single eastern wild turkey can consume more than 221 acorns at a single meal. Who said that being an acorn is easy? With the large amounts of protein, carbohydrates, fats, and minerals that acorns contain, it’s no wonder that animals from white-tailed deer to bear, woodpeckers

to mice, and chipmunks to wood ducks, rely on an autumn supply of acorns to build up body fat reserves for the winter.

And if that weren't enough, a whole group of acorn insects play important ecological roles as well. These insects eat acorns, hollow out acorns so others can use them as homes, or become food for insect-eating animals. They may be small, but their life cycles are complicated. Weevils, for instance, drill holes in an acorn in which they lay their eggs. When the larva matures, it cuts a hole in the acorn, exits, and enters the soil. There it'll spend more than a year before emerging as an adult. And don't forget about oak galls. Have you ever seen small round

balls hanging on an oak tree or its leaves? Those are galls—unique growths that form in response to an egg being laid by the oak gall wasp. After all, what better way for a wasp to safeguard its offspring than to enclose it in a protective gall?

In Vermont and elsewhere, it's all too easy to overlook an oak. During this season of Thanksgiving, take some time to be thankful for oak trees and all they offer—for the food and shelter they provide to Vermont's creatures, the shade they furnish in summer, their colorful display in the fall, and the cinnamon-brown leaves that relentlessly persist during winter. Oaks are definitely okay by me!

2012 Junior Duck Stamp Program

Attention homeschoolers, private/public school teachers, scouts, 4H, and anyone else interested in participating in the 2012 Junior Duck Stamp Program!! The program is designed for all young people in the K-12 grades and requires participants to learn about a species of North American waterfowl and its habitats, and then to create their own artistic interpretation through drawing, painting, or other medium. The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge serves as the Vermont State Coordinators Office for this program. Anyone interested should see contest rules at www.fws.gov/juniorduck or contact Dave Frisque at the Missisquoi NWR, 802-868 - 4781 dave_frisque@fws.gov. Submission deadline is March 15, 2012.

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 \$5.00 shipping and handling.

Name _____
Address _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Please send me: **Audubon Birds Jigsaw Puzzle: Winter Cardinal (\$12.50)**
 The Bird Watching Answer Book (\$14.95)
 The Garden Game (\$26.95)

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

Type of card: MasterCard Visa
Credit Card Number _____ Exp date _____
Signature _____

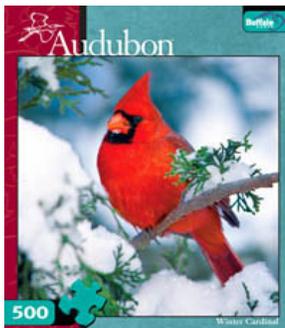
The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS GAMES GIFTS TEE SHIRTS HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors

Holiday Gift Ideas



Audubon Birds Jigsaw Puzzle: Winter Cardinal

\$ 12.50 boxed

529 pieces, 18 x 18 puzzle, full-color photograph, all ages

This beautiful jigsaw puzzle depicts a regal male Cardinal in a wintry landscape. With its brilliant scarlet plumage and clear, rich song, this species is a favorite of many.

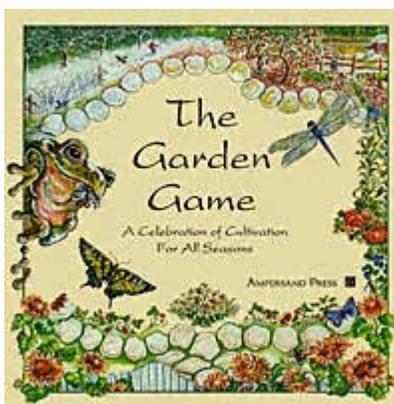
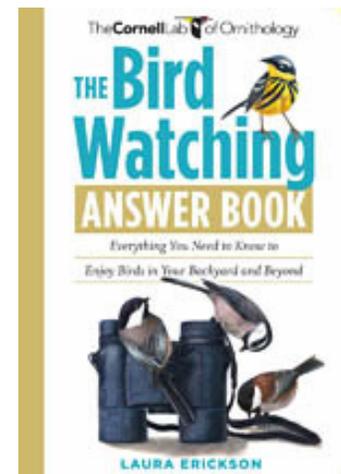
The Bird Watching Answer Book

**Everything You Need to Know to Enjoy
Birds in Your Backyard and Beyond**

Laura Erickson

\$ 14.95 flexibound, 388 pages, 4 5/8 x 6 3/8, b&w illustrations

This handy little reference answers real-life questions that have been sent to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology by birders of all levels from across North America. Erickson's expert answers give readers the companionship of a professional ornithologist as they observe their avian companions. The book's tone is friendly and accessible, even as the answers demonstrate a tremendous depth and breadth of knowledge.



The Garden Game

A Celebration of Cultivation for All Seasons

\$ 26.95 boxed, 9 3/4 x 9 3/4 x 2 1/2 gameboard, playing cards, stone game pieces, ages 8 and up

The Garden Game is an exquisitely illustrated board game about gardening for food and fun. Players feed the soil, plant seeds, nurture the plants, have harvest festivals, and help each other through natural disasters. The player who plants the largest garden and saves the most seeds is the winner. Fun and educational for all ages. For 2–6 players.

(See order form on reverse side of page.)