



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

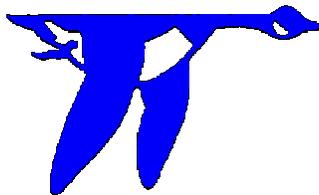
www.friendsofmissisquoi.org

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Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhagen

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MNWR HQ hours are
Monday thru Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm
Saturdays
10:00 am – 2:00 pm

Manager's Update – Summer 2014

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR

Can it really be August already? The field season has been flying along and the refuge staff has been quite busy with a variety of projects and events. This year's field season is quite a bit different from 2013, which saw cooler temperatures and plenty of rain. One obvious sign of a more "normal" year is easily seen driving along route 78 and gazing out at Cabot Clark Marsh. This time last year there was hardly a stem of wild rice growing as water levels peaked in Lake Champlain in mid July. This year, with a more typical summer lake level drawdown, wild rice is popping up all over the wetlands and starting to flower. That's good news for the thousands of waterfowl headed our way this fall that will be relying on the refuge for food and rest on their way south.

Park Ranger Dave Frisque has been quite busy this summer hosting refuge programs and environmental education tours of the refuge to area schools and organizations. Over 300 students have visited the refuge in the last two months, keeping the visitor services program quite busy. Additionally, the refuge and the Friends of Missisquoi NWR hosted our annual International Migratory Bird Day event and our annual kids fishing "derby," both of which were well attended.

On August 9th we held a family paddling day in cooperation with the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, and later in August will be our annual Junior Waterfowl Training Day. It is very rewarding to see the families who come to participate in these refuge events. It is my hope that through encouraging families to come to the refuge we will be fostering a continued exposure to the refuge and the environment for our area youth as parents get hooked into outdoor recreation and appreciation of the refuge's conservation and management mission.

Our biologist, Judy Sefchick-Edwards has been busy working on a variety of wildlife- and habitat-related projects this summer. We are once again involved in a regional effort to census bat species on the refuge by using remote acoustic recording devices. Although the data is not yet completely analyzed, it is apparent that the main river corridor of the Missisquoi is heavily used by several species of bats.

The refuge has again hosted nesting Bald Eagles—two separate nests again, and both were successful. Although this may be good news for Vermont's eagle population, we are once again noticing a disruption in the Great Blue Heron rookery on the refuge. Early in the season we noticed that at least one large section of the rookery had been completely abandoned. We will not have total numbers of successful nests until later in the summer, but it's likely our heron production will be down considerably this year, likely due to the nesting Bald Eagles as well as the many juvenile Bald Eagles using the refuge as hunting grounds.

We are once again fortunate to be working with the Friends on a water chestnut control operation. The Friends were successful in receiving a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program this year. When added to the remainder of the State Invasive Species grant from 2013, we were able to fund another field season for contractors to hand pull this aquatic invasive plant from the refuge. The crew has been working for two weeks as of this writing and have harvested over 1200 water chestnut rosettes from refuge wetlands. We hope that by hitting this problem hard for two consecutive seasons we will be able to see water chestnut infestations drop to manageable levels, as they were prior to the flooding of 2011. Thanks to the Friends again for helping make this critical management project possible!

The refuge has recently advertised for the replacement of the Mac's Bend boat ramps, a project we hope to begin by September. These ramps are open from September through December and are the primary boat access for our waterfowl hunters during the fall. The new ramps should improve access especially during low water levels, as are typical in the fall.

We have been fortunate to have several volunteers working with us this summer helping on a variety of projects from routine maintenance, working the Visitor Center on the weekends, and biological and outreach projects. If you haven't met Ginger and Benny Bradford, our summer RV volunteers, please stop by the Visitor Center on the weekend and say

hello. We have two students working with us this summer as volunteers: Ken Yamazaki from University of Vermont and Marnie Rickert from University of New Hampshire. Both have been exceptional volunteers and have provided the refuge with much needed help on biological and public use projects. We have also been lucky to have Doug Apirian back with us this summer. Doug and Marnie have been working together on many projects including trail work and invasive species control.

The refuge is also once again hosting a Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) crew this summer. This year the refuge has the pleasure of working with an all-female Leadership Development Crew, a special smaller group working to develop their individual leadership skills. Their dedication to the job and their passion for working outdoors and on the refuge have been obvious and well-appreciated by the refuge staff. I hope that many visitors have seen the VYCC at work and have stopped to thank them personally!

Summer is a great time on the refuge and is always the main season that keeps the refuge staff on its toes. We hope you have been able to get out onto our trails or paddle the rivers to experience this incredible wetland resource and see some of the great work our volunteers and staff have been doing to make this refuge a truly exceptional part of Vermont's natural heritage.

FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Bi-monthly Board Meeting

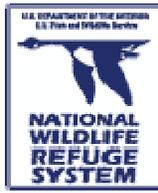
Wednesday, September 10, 2014 at 6:30 pm

At the Refuge Visitor Center

Members are always welcome to attend.

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

Next meeting: Wednesday, November 12, 2014 at 6:30 pm



Fall 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.

Photography Workshop **Saturday September 13 (tentative date), 9:00 am to 2:30 pm**

Robert Chaperon Jr. will lead a photography workshop for Beginning through Intermediate photographers. Topics will include: Sensor size; File formats; Exposure Triangle: Apertures, Shutter speeds and ISO; the Creative Triangle: Depth of field, Motion and Grain; and Color temperatures, Focus and Composition. Classroom instruction and discussion will be held in the morning, followed by a lunch break at noon (bring your own lunch) and field work in the afternoon.

Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity and to confirm the date. Class size is limited to 12 participants. Meet at the Refuge Visitor Center on Tabor Road.

Fall Open House **Saturday September 27 (tentative date)**

A Fall Open House is currently in the planning stages. Please check the Friends website for more information as it becomes available.

Volunteer Tree Planting **Saturday October 4, 9:00 to 12:00 noon**

Volunteers are needed for tree planting! Join refuge staff to plant trees across the river from the Black/Maquam Trail parking lot. Planting will be to help stabilize the river bank and encourage the restoration of the riparian forest corridor along the Missisquoi River.

Gloves will be provided. Bring a shovel if you can. Meet at Black/Maquam Trail parking lot on Rte 78, approx 2-1/2 miles west of Swanton. Don't be late or you'll miss your boat ride! Please contact the refuge at 802-868-4781 for any additional information and to let refuge staff know you are planning to help. Hope to see you there!

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

Join Friends of Missisquoi NWR members Joe Belanger, Mark Batchelder, and Bob Chaperon for nature/photography walks on various refuge trails, held the first Saturday of each month. Registration is not required. Bob Chaperon will be trying something new with a "photography topic" for each walk, beginning in October. **Come have fun with us!**



September 6: Jeep Trail. Meet at the Louie's Landing boat access area. We will drive in to the trail head at Mac's Bend.

October 4: Stephen Young Marsh Trail. Photography topic will be on exposure. Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge headquarters and across the road from the marsh.

November 1: Maquam/Black Creek Trail. Photography topic will be on depth of field. Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 1/2 miles west of Swanton.

Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks

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

Friends of MNWR members Ken Copenhaver and Julie Filiberti will 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 birders of all skill levels and provide a wonderful opportunity to learn about birds throughout the seasons. **After 53 months of walks we have recorded 133 species of birds.** Registration is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

September 20: 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.

October 18: Old Railroad Passage Trail. Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge Visitor Center and across the road from the Stephen Young Marsh.

November 15: Maquam/Black Creek Trail. Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.

To check for any schedule changes or additions, visit the Friends website at www.friendsofmissisquoi.org and click on "Calendar."

For more information about the refuge, visit www.fws.gov/refuge/missisquoi/

Friends Receive \$1000 from Ditch Pickle Classic

The Ditch Pickle Classic, held on June 28 and 29, was a great success again this year. The "catch-photo-release" bass tournament was attended by 115 participants, and Fox News even did a feature on the tournament. The good news for the Friends is that the Ditch Pickle organization has donated \$1000 to the Friends in appreciation of the use of refuge facilities for their barbeque and for the support of the Friends. They would like to see the money used for the annual Kid's Fishing Clinic. The Friends of MNWR are very appreciative of this generous gift!

80th Anniversary of the Duck Stamp

The new 2014-2015 Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp (often called the Duck Stamp) is now on sale. This year's stamp - valid from July through June - shows a pair of Canvasback painted by Adam Grimm. Each stamp costs \$15, and almost all the proceeds from the sales of the stamp - adding up to about \$24 million per year - go directly to the Migratory Bird Conservation (MBCF) to secure vital breeding, stopover, and wintering habitats for Canvasback and other bird species in the National Wildlife Refuge System. This should be of great comfort to everyone who buys a stamp this year.



Today, parts of 252 National Wildlife Refuges (accounting for 2.37 million acres) and over 200 Waterfowl Production Areas (with over 3.0 million acres secured) owe their existence to the stamp investments made through the MBCF. We can think of no better - and more efficient - way to support securing wildlife habitat than the act of buying a federal stamp. It's simple. It's inexpensive. It's proven. Please consider standing with us and other supporters of the stamp. Be counted. Buy at least one stamp and encourage your friends to do likewise.

Excerpted from the July Wingtips e-Newsletter, published by the Friends of the Migratory Bird/Duck Stamp. <http://www.friendsofthestamp.org/>

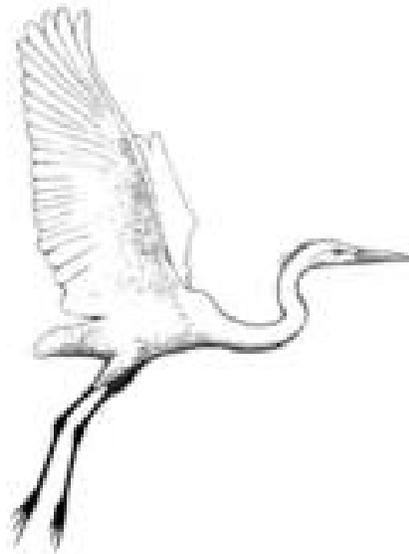
What's Great about Egrets?

by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge is home to many “greats.” You’ll find Great Crested Flycatchers or maybe a Great Horned Owl while walking the trails; or you may come across Greater Scaup or Great Black-backed Gulls when boating in Missisquoi Bay. Let’s face it, greatness is all around. During August and September every year, another “great” arrives at the refuge. You can’t miss them—they’re bright, they’re white, and they have a wingspan of almost 5 feet. Move over Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets are here!

You may be asking yourself, “Why are Great Egrets arriving here now? Are they late breeders, early migrants, or do egrets just want to have fun?” On the Atlantic Coast, Great Egrets generally nest from southern New England to Florida, but after the serious business of breeding, these beautiful birds disperse. Whether they’re searching for some new and interesting food to eat, or just need a change of pace or scenery, post-breeding excursions take egrets to places far and wide, including areas north, like Missisquoi. The number of dispersing juveniles peaks during August and September, so that’s why we’re seeing such high concentrations of Great Egrets now.

What’s great about egrets? Svelte and slightly smaller than great blue herons, Great Egrets are snow white beauties with dark, elongated legs and feet, and a long, pointed, yellow bill. But if you’re thinking they’re just another pretty face in the marsh, think again. Although egrets seem to spend most of their time standing motionless or walking slowly to stalk their prey, don’t let their seemingly patient manner fool you. These wily waders have more moves than you can imagine. To get a glimpse



of their prey, they may use head tilting, neck swaying, or hovering. If that doesn’t work, they may resort to more desperate measures like hopping, foot stirring, wing flipping, or foot paddling—maneuvers that would astound yoga enthusiasts and break dancers alike! If that isn’t enough to impress, in the sky, they can fly more than 25 mph.

If you think these elegant birds couldn’t become any more dazzling, you may be surprised. Great Egrets get even more dressed up for the breeding season. As if developing green facial skin isn’t enough, Great Egrets go the extra mile by sprouting 50+ long, ornamental feather plumes that extend beyond their tail. But beauty has its disadvantages—in the late nineteenth century, Great Egrets

were hunted nearly to extinction so their plumes could adorn ladies’ hats. Luckily for us (and them), public outcry led to some of the first laws to protect birds. For years, the Great Egret has been the long-time symbol of the National Audubon Society, one of the oldest environmental organizations in North America, founded to protect all species of wading birds from being killed for their feathers.

Within the past 50 years, sightings of Great Egrets have increased in Vermont due to a shift in their distribution, related to a changing climate. For those of us who are fortunate enough to live in the Champlain Valley, not only do we get to see post-breeding Great Egrets, but sometimes we see breeding egrets here as well. Like in 2004, 2009, 2010, and 2011, when a handful of Great Egrets decided to nest among the Great Blue Herons on Shad Island. Whatever their reasons for being here, I’m glad they are—after all, what isn’t great about egrets?

Discovering Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

(originally published in the June 2014 issue of *The Flyer* by the National Wildlife Refuge Association; used by permission)

Tucked away in the northwest corner of Vermont along the Canadian border of Lake Champlain is a relatively small national wildlife refuge that is making a big international impact.

Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge is known as a stopover for more than 20,000 migrating waterfowl each fall, as well as dozens of songbirds traveling between breeding grounds in Canada and southern wintering areas. As of this year, the refuge is also the central component of a new Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

The convention establishes international guidelines for wise use practices around wetlands and is designed as a voluntary effort to improve wetlands management globally.

The first such site in Vermont, the Missisquoi Delta and Bay Wetlands joins 35 other designated sites in the U.S. and over 2,000 around the world. Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge is the 20th national wildlife refuge to be designated under the Ramsar Convention.

Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, said applying for the designation was a team effort with colleagues at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department who recognized the area's unique qualities. The designation doesn't really impact management of the refuge, Sturm said, but it does put Missisquoi on the map as a model for wetlands protection, alongside some larger sites such as the Everglades and San Francisco Bay. "We're now recognized on that same scale," Sturm said.

One of the unique aspects of Missisquoi is the Maquam Bog, the largest bog in Vermont and one of the largest ombrotrophic bogs in New England. Maquam Bog harbors a rare pitch pine plant community, the only example of this natural community type in Vermont. Other important aspects include the Missisquoi River's bird's foot delta that feeds into Missisquoi Bay and the state's largest intact silver maple floodplain forest – all amounting to high quality wildlife habitat.

Visiting Missisquoi. Visitors to Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge will find a multitude of outdoor recreation options, from hiking, canoeing and birding to hunting and fishing. Take a walk along a grassland trail, and you'll likely spot nesting bobolinks. Hike a little further to a boardwalk overlooking the Stephen J. Young Marsh and you'll get an excellent view of an osprey nest full of action, as well as several other species of songbirds, beaver and other wildlife.

The Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge host monthly bird monitoring walks at the refuge. For more than four years, birders have gathered data on the presence of birds, their abundance, and changes in populations. The information is entered into the Vermont e-Bird database, which is stored by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society. So far, Missisquoi birders have recorded 133 species at the refuge.

A bird banding research display in the visitor's center shows the changes in bird populations since the refuge was established in 1943. Back then, 46 percent of the waterfowl banded at the refuge were black ducks. Today, only one percent of the banded birds are black ducks, and more than a third are mallards.

Another new dynamic occurring at Missisquoi is the recent arrival of bald eagles. Bald eagles are still listed as endangered in Vermont, and Missisquoi reports two of the state's 16-18 nesting pair. This is great news for eagles; however, the local great blue heron population may be less enthused. Since the eagles began nesting at the refuge, what was once Vermont's single largest great blue heron rookery has disbanded into a few smaller nesting sites, and biologists at the refuge suspect the eagles may be the cause of this disruption.

The refuge is a mecca for birders and waterfowlers in the fall, as thousands of migrating ducks and geese stop over on their journeys south. It appears Missisquoi has been a popular destination for quite some time. Sturm said archeologists have discovered evidence on the refuge of human populations dating back 7,000 years. Researchers have found remains of native Abenaki villages, as well as remains from European settler homesteads.

Today, the refuge focuses on offering education and inspiration to modern-day visitors, about 80,000 per year. From Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training to celebrations around International Migratory Bird Day and fishing and boating events, Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge has something for everyone.

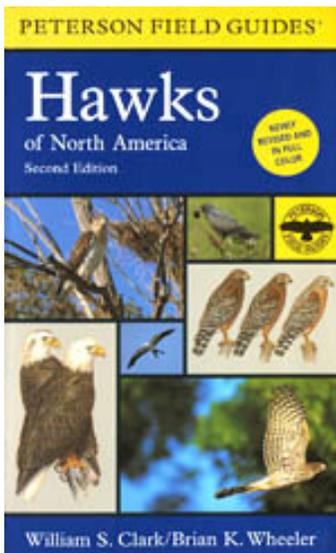
The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS GAMES GIFTS TEE SHIRTS HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors

Get ready for Fall birding with these books!



Peterson Field Guide to Hawks of North America Second Edition

William S. Clark

Illustrated by Brian K. Wheeler

\$ 22.00, flexibound

304 pages, 4 1/2 x 7 1/4

full-color photographs, full-color illustrations, maps

This identification guide features forty beautifully painted color plates showing key identifying field marks. Full-color photographs throughout the book supplement the plates. The text, covering all 39 diurnal raptors seen in North America, describes vagrant species and includes the current taxonomic nomenclature. Up-to-date color maps show ranges for each season.

101 Ways to Help Birds

Laura Erickson

\$ 19.95, paper

284 pages, 6 x 9, b&w illustrations

- Specific, meaningful actions anyone can take
- Practical advice on feeding and attracting backyard birds
- How to create a bird-friendly household and community

This engaging book presents 101 things individuals can do to help both individual birds and bird populations as a whole. It also explains exactly how these actions can make a difference—what wrongs they help correct and what improvements they can bring about. Bird-friendly (and environment-friendly) practices are described in detail: things anyone can do around the home and garden, at work, at the store, in their community, in the outdoors, and on the road. Anyone who appreciates wild birds knows that the animals need our help. This timely guide shows bird-lovers what they can do.

