



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.

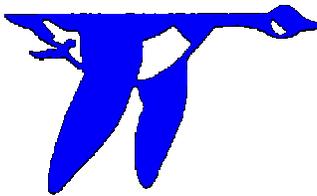
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www.friendsofmissisquoi.org

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Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

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

Friends Hold Their First “Big Sit!”

On Saturday, October 7, the Friends held a “Big Sit!” at Stephen J. Young Marsh. What is a Big Sit!? It’s an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event hosted by the Bird Watcher’s Digest magazine. It has been traditionally held on the second Sunday of October, but groups can also hold it on the Saturday before. It’s like a Big Day or a bird-a-thon in that the goal is to count as many bird species as possible within a 24-hour period—but with the major restriction that observations must be made from within a 17-foot diameter circle!

The Friends chose the observation platform at Stephen J. Young Marsh, the size of which is well within the 17-foot limit. The first observers arrived at about 6:00 AM, just before dawn. The first bird counted was the gobbling of a Wild Turkey, followed by the low call of a Great-horned Owl drifting over the marsh. Throughout the day, 17 observers came and went, but we always had at least one observer on the platform, per Big Sit! rules. We ended the day at 6:30 PM as darkness fell with a total of 35 species.

The only other Big Sit! in Vermont has been held at the Audubon Nature Center in Huntington for many years. The participants at Stephen J. Young Marsh were excited to be only the second circle in Vermont and hope to hold the event again next year.

Bags 4 My Cause

The Hannafords Store in Swanton has again chosen the Friends as a recipient of their *Hannaford Helps Reusable Bag* program. For the month of December, the Friends will receive a \$1 donation from each purchase of a reusable bag at the Hannaford store in Swanton. The Friends had previously been chosen for this program by both the Swanton and St. Albans stores. We thank them for thinking of us and for their support!

Seeking Board Members

The Friends of Missisquoi NWR are looking for two new members to join the Board of Directors. If you think you would like help set the direction of the Friends, contact us at board@friendsofmissisquoi.org. Thank you.

On a related note, the board would like to thank Bob Chaperon for his service on the board. Bob recently retired from the board after many years of service, including managing the Friends’ membership, co-leading the monthly Nature/Photography walks, and presenting photography workshops. Thanks Bob!

Manager's Update – November 2017

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR

With the field season mostly behind us, the refuge staff are busy completing end-of-season management tasks and getting ready for winter. If you have been by the refuge headquarters in the last month or so, you will have noticed the fields on the east side of Tabor road being mowed to knock down the dense vegetation and prepare these fields for next summer's grassland birds. We are also spreading wood ash on the fields directly across from the refuge office to improve soil conditions for a healthy grassland. Wood ash acts similarly to other amendments by raising the soil pH (making it more basic) and improving growing conditions for a variety of favorable plants. We have used wood ash at the Eagle Point Unit over the past two growing seasons with very favorable results.

You may also have noticed more cutting to improve early successional forest habitat at Stephen J. Young Marsh this fall. This was the third series of patch cuts to set back succession and improve habitat for a variety of species tied to young forests. Using a machine called a "Fecon," Maintenance Mechanic Joe Bertrand spent several days creating openings in targeted areas of forest that had grown too old to provide the needed habitat many species rely on. All told, since 2014, the refuge has created a little more than 8 acres of young forest habitat at Stephen Young Marsh. This last series of cuts focused on enlarging areas cut previously as well as opening up areas around mast-producing trees such as apples, oaks, and cherries--valuable food for wildlife.

Successional management is important in Vermont. During the past 50 years, Vermont and other New England states have seen a drastic decline in early successional forest habitat as forests mature, development continues, and other changes in land use occur. In the process, wildlife populations that depend on young forests for food and cover are declining as well.

We chose to do this management on Stephen J. Young Marsh for a few reasons. This tract exists in a fragmented landscape with 51 acres of forested habitat in an existing 135 acre woodlot that is surrounded by actively-managed hayfields. Many migratory birds utilizing mid- to late-stage forest habitat require larger home ranges to be successful. However, early successional species typically can be productive in smaller areas having smaller home range requirements. As a result, the same patch size habitat of young forest will typically support a greater density of breeding birds than an equal patch of mature forest.

For example, Chestnut-sided Warblers, Gray Catbirds, and Common Yellowthroats typically have a minimum habitat requirement of 0.5 acres, whereas forest "interior" species such as Ovenbirds require forests at least 200 acres in size. Many forest birds that breed in isolated smaller forest blocks also have greater nest failure and larger territories indicating that more effort is required to raise a brood in isolated small forest blocks. Managing a portion of Stephen J. Young Marsh for young forests will provide greater wildlife benefits (per acre) for migratory birds than managing for a mature forest. This area also makes an excellent demonstration site to show landowners ways to improve habitat in small woodlots.

As management projects in the field slow down and we "button up" the refuge for winter, the staff will begin evaluating this past season and start making plans for 2018. Winter is a good time to reflect on successes and challenges. The refuge is a great place for reflection, and taking a leisurely stroll on one of the refuge's trails during late fall and winter is a great way to do it. I hope everyone takes a moment during the busy holiday season to break away for a walk on the refuge to see the forest *and* the trees!

Volunteers Needed

The Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge is seeking volunteers to give their time and energy to help the refuge. Some volunteer opportunities include:

- Helping with school groups during the summer months
- Helping with invasive species control
- Helping with special events such as Migratory Bird Day, Fishing Clinic, and Jr. Waterfowl Training Program
- Volunteers interested in operating farm tractors to cut grasslands

We would also like to start volunteer "adopt a trail" groups where folks get together and use refuge tools and supplies to provide upkeep and maintenance on trails.

If you have an interest in any of these activities, please contact refuge manager Ken Sturm at ken_sturm@fws.gov or call (802) 868-4781.

FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Bi-monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, January 10, 2018 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, March 7, 2018 at 6:30 pm

CAR VANDAL

Reprinted from *The Birding Community E-bulletin*,
published by the National Wildlife Refuge Association

The residents of Snellville, Gwinnett County, Georgia, were recently the victims of a series of petty crimes. Specifically, there was a pattern of smashed side-view car mirrors in the community. When more than two dozen people around the Nob Hill section of Snellville reported the same kind of broken glass mirrors on their cars, the police were sent out and were determined to find the culprits. The hypothesis was that the damage was likely being caused by young boys with BB guns, or possible vandals running around with hammers smashing the mirrors.

But according to local *Channel 2 Action News* out of metro-Atlanta, the culprit was a Pileated Woodpecker, defending territory against "rival" birds! At the end of the day, local police reported that the case was solved.

You can access all the past E-bulletins on the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) website: <http://refugeassociation.org/news/birding-bulletin/>

A Conservation and Family Tradition: Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

Ducks in the air and leaves on the ground mark both the *end* of September, and the *beginning* of a long-held tradition. The refuge boat launch is bustling with young, smiling faces, animated chatter, and enthusiastic adults taking photos to preserve great future memories. It's the start of Vermont's duck hunting season, with the Youth Waterfowl Hunting Weekend at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge!

Surrounded by the genuine fervor and excitement, I can't help but smile. Not only did this crew have a successful refuge hunt, but they also had a memorable family day outdoors. Again, I'm reminded that the conservation tradition of waterfowl hunting, and the purchase of Federal Duck Stamps, has made it possible for *us all* to experience and enjoy our National Wildlife Refuge System.

"Missisquoi NWR has one of the northeast's largest, natural, freshwater wetland complexes, and is one of the last truly wild places in Vermont," says native Vermonter, Chris Smith, an avid first-generation duck hunter, and father as well as mentor to junior duck hunters, Zach and Caleb. Not only are the Missisquoi Delta and Bay Wetlands *important stopover sites for migratory waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway*, but they're RAMSAR designated "*Wetlands of International Importance*" too.

What's more, this refuge is living proof that duck stamps do *more* than provide a license to hunt. With ninety-eight cents of every dollar going towards National Wildlife Refuge System lands, it's no surprise that 87.5% of Missisquoi NWR was bought with duck stamp dollars. Chris is proud to buy them and says, "Without duck stamps, the number of waterfowl, water birds, and other

wetland-dependent species would decline, as would the opportunities to recreate in these special places."

This weekend, the Smiths arrived at the refuge with great anticipation and preparation. Chris says, "I enjoy seeing all the 'firsts' for young hunters:

wearing waders, getting stuck in mud, or shooting certain ducks." A month earlier, the family attended the refuge's annual Junior Waterfowl Hunter Training, to improve skills and discuss safe, ethical hunting and wildlife conservation. Completion of the training, and a subsequent lottery draw, gave these juniors a chance to hunt in sought-after refuge blinds.



Smith boys in 2016

As a mentor, Chris won't hunt, but says, "It's rewarding to pass along knowledge and experience, and have an opportunity for real quality time with my sons." He's proud to have passed this tradition down to them. Chris remembers when both boys shot their first banded ducks at the refuge. "I'll never forget their excitement and pride," he said, then added, "Without the refuge, my hunting experiences would be greatly diminished, but the loss of wildlife would be even more devastating."

Missisquoi NWR means different things to different people, but the age-old tradition of waterfowl hunting is the reason this refuge exists. For some, like Caleb, the refuge represents a chance to observe and hunt near the greatest concentration of waterfowl in Vermont. "Seeing lots of ducks and having many opportunities to shoot sets the refuge apart," he said. To others, like Zach, "It's a place where I can get out of the house and do stuff I love—whether it's hunting, fishing, or banding ducks with Judy. It's a great place."

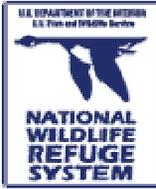
Bird Monitoring Walk Statistics

After 92 months of Bird Monitoring Walks, a total of 993 observers have recorded 150 species and 14,607 individual birds. The following chart lists the species by the date each species was first observed.

Date	Trail	Species
3/20/2010	RR	American Crow
3/20/2010	RR	American Goldfinch
3/20/2010	RR	American Robin
3/20/2010	RR	American Tree Sparrow
3/20/2010	RR	Black-capped Chickadee
3/20/2010	RR	Blue Jay
3/20/2010	RR	Brown-headed Cowbird
3/20/2010	RR	Canada Goose
3/20/2010	RR	Common Grackle
3/20/2010	RR	European Starling
3/20/2010	RR	Hairy Woodpecker
3/20/2010	RR	Killdeer
3/20/2010	RR	Mallard
3/20/2010	RR	Northern Cardinal
3/20/2010	RR	Pileated Woodpecker
3/20/2010	RR	Red-tailed Hawk
3/20/2010	RR	Red-winged Blackbird
3/20/2010	RR	Ring-billed Gull
3/20/2010	RR	Snow Goose
3/20/2010	RR	Song Sparrow
3/20/2010	RR	White-breasted Nuthatch
4/17/2010	Maq	American Woodcock
4/17/2010	Maq	Brown Creeper
4/17/2010	Maq	Dark-eyed Junco
4/17/2010	Maq	Downy Woodpecker
4/17/2010	Maq	Eastern Phoebe
4/17/2010	Maq	Golden-crowned Kinglet
4/17/2010	Maq	Great Blue Heron
4/17/2010	Maq	Northern Flicker
4/17/2010	Maq	Northern Harrier
4/17/2010	Maq	Rusty Blackbird
4/17/2010	Maq	Sharp-shinned Hawk
4/17/2010	Maq	Tree Swallow
4/17/2010	Maq	Tufted Titmouse
4/17/2010	Maq	White-throated Sparrow
4/17/2010	Maq	Winter Wren
4/17/2010	Maq	Wood Duck
4/17/2010	Maq	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
5/15/2010	SYM	American Redstart
5/15/2010	SYM	Baltimore Oriole
5/15/2010	SYM	Belted Kingfisher
5/15/2010	SYM	Black Tern
5/15/2010	SYM	Black-and-white Warbler
5/15/2010	SYM	Black-throated Green
5/15/2010	SYM	Blue-winged Teal
5/15/2010	SYM	Bobolink
5/15/2010	SYM	Common Yellowthroat
5/15/2010	SYM	Eastern Kingbird
5/15/2010	SYM	House Wren
5/15/2010	SYM	Least Flycatcher

Date	Trail	Species
5/15/2010	SYM	Magnolia Warbler
5/15/2010	SYM	Osprey
5/15/2010	SYM	Ovenbird
5/15/2010	SYM	Red-breasted Nuthatch
5/15/2010	SYM	Rose-breasted Grosbeak
5/15/2010	SYM	Ruffed Grouse
5/15/2010	SYM	Turkey Vulture
5/15/2010	SYM	Warbling Vireo
5/15/2010	SYM	White-crowned Sparrow
5/15/2010	SYM	Yellow Warbler
6/19/2010	RR	Alder Flycatcher
6/19/2010	RR	Barn Swallow
6/19/2010	RR	Cedar Waxwing
6/19/2010	RR	Chestnut-sided Warbler
6/19/2010	RR	Gray Catbird
6/19/2010	RR	Northern Waterthrush
6/19/2010	RR	Savannah Sparrow
6/19/2010	RR	Swamp Sparrow
6/19/2010	RR	Veery
7/17/2010	Maq	Chipping Sparrow
7/17/2010	Maq	Great Crested Flycatcher
7/17/2010	Maq	Mourning Dove
7/17/2010	Maq	Ruby-throated Hummingbird
7/17/2010	Maq	Scarlet Tanager
7/17/2010	Maq	Yellow-throated Vireo
8/21/2010	Jeep	Eastern Wood-Pewee
8/21/2010	Jeep	Great Horned Owl
8/21/2010	Jeep	Red-eyed Vireo
8/21/2010	Jeep	Spotted Sandpiper
9/18/2010	SYM	Blackburnian Warbler
9/18/2010	SYM	Canada Warbler
9/18/2010	SYM	Common Merganser
9/18/2010	SYM	Wilson's Snipe
10/16/2010	RR	Fox Sparrow
10/16/2010	RR	Yellow-rumped Warbler
1/15/2011	Maq	Common Raven
4/16/2011	SYM	Common Goldeneye
4/16/2011	SYM	Great Egret
4/16/2011	SYM	Pied-billed Grebe
5/21/2011	SYM	Blackpoll Warbler
5/21/2011	SYM	Common Gallinule
5/21/2011	SYM	Marsh Wren
5/21/2011	SYM	Nashville Warbler
5/21/2011	SYM	Tennessee Warbler
5/21/2011	SYM	Willow Flycatcher
6/18/2011	SYM	Bald Eagle
6/18/2011	SYM	Cliff Swallow
6/18/2011	SYM	Green Heron
6/18/2011	SYM	House Sparrow
7/16/2011	Maq	Double-crested Cormorant

Date	Trail	Species
8/20/2011	Jeep	Solitary Sandpiper
9/17/2011	SYM	American Bittern
9/17/2011	SYM	Blue-headed Vireo
9/17/2011	SYM	Green-winged Teal
9/17/2011	SYM	Virginia Rail
10/15/2011	RR	Northern Shrike
4/21/2012	Maq	Hermit Thrush
4/21/2012	Maq	Pine Warbler
4/21/2012	Maq	Ruby-crowned Kinglet
5/19/2012	SYM	Black-throated Blue
5/19/2012	SYM	Caspian Tern
5/19/2012	SYM	Cooper's Hawk
5/19/2012	SYM	Northern Parula
5/19/2012	SYM	Rock Pigeon
6/16/2012	RR	Black-billed Cuckoo
6/16/2012	RR	Common Tern
7/21/2012	Maq	Black-crowned Night-Heron
7/21/2012	Maq	Broad-winged Hawk
7/21/2012	Maq	House Finch
7/21/2012	Maq	Purple Martin
10/20/2012	RR	Pine Siskin
11/17/2012	Maq	Bohemian Waxwing
1/16/2013	Maq	Barred Owl
3/16/2013	RR	Common Redpoll
4/20/2013	Maq	Hooded Merganser
4/20/2013	Maq	Ring-necked Duck
5/18/2013	SYM	Eastern Meadowlark
6/15/2013	RR	Common Loon
8/17/2013	Jeep	Chimney Swift
8/17/2013	Jeep	Lesser Yellowlegs
8/17/2013	Jeep	Wilson's Warbler
4/19/2014	MAQ	Brown Thrasher
5/17/2014	SYM	Wood Thrush
7/19/2014	MAQ	Indigo Bunting
12/20/2014	Jeep	Red-bellied Woodpecker
4/18/2015	Maq	American Black Duck
4/18/2015	Maq	Wild Turkey
10/17/2015	RR	Northern Pintail
11/21/2015	MAQ	Herring Gull
5/21/2016	SYM	American Kestrel
5/21/2016	SYM	Golden-winged Warbler
5/21/2016	SYM	Swainson's Thrush
7/16/2016	MAQ	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
9/17/2016	SYM	Greater Yellowlegs
11/16/2016	MAQ	Rough-legged Hawk
8/19/2017	Jeep	Least Bittern
8/19/2017	Jeep	Least Sandpiper
10/21/2017	RR	Great Black-backed Gull
10/21/2017	RR	Peregrine Falcon
10/21/2017	RR	White-winged Scoter



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.

Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks

3rd Saturday of each month, 8:00 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 are 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 92 months of walks we have recorded 150 species of birds.** (In October we added Peregrine Falcon, Great Black-backed Gull, and White-winged Scoter to our species list.) Registration for the walks is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

December 16: Jeep Trail. Meet at the Louie's Landing parking lot on Rte 78 approx. 3 ½ miles west of Swanton. We will meet at the gate and drive in to the trail head at Mac's Bend.

January 20: Maquam/Black Creek Trail. Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton village.

February 17: Stephen Young Marsh Trail. Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge Visitor Center and across the road from the marsh.

Please note that the Monthly Nature/Photography Walks have been discontinued until further notice. These walks had been held on the first Saturday of each month.

Other Winter events will be posted on the Friends website as soon as dates are known.

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/

Also, visit <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!

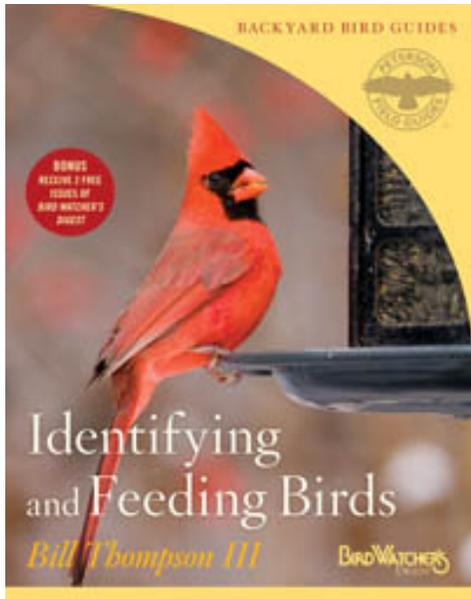


The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS GAMES GIFTS TEE SHIRTS HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors



Peterson Field Guides: Identifying and Feeding Birds

Bill Thompson III

\$ 14.95, paper

246 pages, 7 x 9, full-color photographs, maps

This readable, friendly guide is intended for bird watchers and non-bird watchers alike—for anyone who wants to enjoy nature right in his or her own backyard.

The longtime editor of *Bird Watcher's Digest* and author of numerous books on birds, Bill Thompson III has been feeding and watching birds for forty years. He has tried everything, and here he shares what he's learned so that readers can avoid mistakes and skip right to successful bird feeding. He also debunks common myths about bird feeding: Does feeding birds stop them from migrating? Will birds starve if you leave your feeders empty after the birds have come to rely on them?

In an easygoing and lighthearted style, seven chapters cover all the elements needed to attract birds to a backyard (food, water, shelter) and address special cases and problems (keeping bees out of the hummingbird feeder, preventing birds from flying into windows, and much more). The final chapter profiles the 130 species that are most common at backyard feeders. No separate field guide is needed; it's all right here—everything a beginner needs to know to attract birds and then figure out what kind they are.

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.

