



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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Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

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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 – February 2016

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR

It has been an unusual winter in Vermont and the entire northeast. According to NOAA, 2015 was the warmest year on record. The Northeast Regional Climate Center noted that Burlington had the highest temperature ever recorded during winter with a high of 68 degrees F (!) on December 24. Now through January and just starting February with temperatures in the 40's it appears that trend seems to be sticking around in the New Year.

The warmth is of course disconcerting for a number of reasons and all linked to humans' effect on global climate. Here at Missisquoi NWR I often think about the long-term effects of a warming climate on the wetlands and wildlife the refuge was established to protect. Being utterly linked to Lake Champlain and Missisquoi River creates the reliance on their ebbs and flows. Should warming climates create increased precipitation at the wrong time of year, our habitat development for waterfowl may falter for our fall migration. Should water levels rise gradually to create a "new normal" for summer lake levels, our rare and biologically important floodplain forests may suffer as the flooded habitat persists through the already short but critical growing season. Higher lake levels during the growing season create less stable soil conditions and allow windthrow of our older silver maples.

This warm weather has also put the refuge a bit behind in our normal winter projects such as monitoring beaver and muskrat populations, maintaining waterfowl nest boxes, and boundary sign maintenance. Nonetheless, most people I've spoken with admit that it has been a nice reprieve from last winter's chill! Although we are still waiting for snow to get us back on snowshoes and cross-country skis, I encourage everyone to take advantage of this mild winter and get out on refuge trails when you can. The joy of being familiar with nature can really be emphasized when you pay attention to the small details of shifting seasons. Before we know it willow and dogwood buds will be breaking, Snow Buntings will be headed north, and the first spring migrants will start filtering in. I, for one, look forward to these changes, although a few more snowfalls would sure be nice!

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/

This Winter: It's Raining Cats and Dogs...and Snowing Buntings!

by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

“Odd” may be the only way to describe the winter of 2015-16. The warmer-than-normal temperatures, and off-and-on rain, have me repeating the rhyme, “Rain, rain, go away!” Without thick ice for crossing the river, I see the prospects of completing winter field work, literally, going down the drain. Although I can’t change the weather, there’s still a silver lining: It may be raining cats and dogs, but at least it’s snowing buntings!

Some storms just can’t be stopped. It’s no doubt that the whirling, twirling, swirling flocks of snow buntings, or “snowflakes” as they’re affectionately called, have been the best Vermont “storms” this winter! Dancing in flight, these snow white sensations appear to be in constant motion as they twist and turn in unison, like small snow squalls, before settling onto winter fields.

Why do snow buntings come to Vermont? Being the most northerly breeding songbirds on earth, snow buntings arrive here in late fall for a “winter break” from the harsh reality of their true home: the high Arctic. Why don’t they venture further south, to lush leafy fields of green, where they could drink margaritas and eat-in-excess? They probably could...but being strictly winter birds and true creatures of their namesake—snow—they fancy familiar frosty landscapes, quickly returning further north at the slightest signs of spring!

If you’ve never seen a snow bunting, you’re in for a real treat! Unlike nearly all other songbirds on the

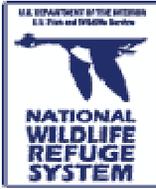
continent, they’re feathered in immaculate white, with the largest white wing patches of any small bird. In winter, their plumage is highlighted in a rich, rusty brown, making them virtually disappear in Vermont’s fields, while gleefully gleaning grass or weed seeds. Being built for the cold definitely has its advantages. Fluffy feathers and partially-feathered feet allow snow buntings to withstand temperatures of -40F. If that’s not enough, they even have the amazing ability to burrow into the snow!

If you’ve ever thought that spending the winter in Vermont is bad, you should try spending spring in the high Arctic! Male buntings usually arrive on the tundra in April, sometimes up to six weeks before their female counterparts. With only the polar ice cap and North Pole being farther north than their breeding grounds, bachelor buntings have more to contend with than just setting up and defending suitable territories! Not only do they face snow-covered ground and scarce food, but temperatures can still dip to -20F, and severe snowstorms are common. Let’s face it—these guys are serious about looking for love!

This winter, grab your snow pants, a hat, and some other insulation (and maybe an umbrella!), and get out to see snow buntings while you can. Winter wouldn’t be the same without them. Although it hasn’t been snowing, it’s definitely snowing buntings!

Thank you to Hannafords!

The Swanton Hannafords selected the Friends of Missisquoi as the January recipient of their "Hannafords Helps" reusable bag program. The Swanton store donated \$1 to the Friends for each reusable shopping bag purchased at the local store. We thank them for thinking of us and for their support!



Spring 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.

Bog Walk

February 27, 8:00 to 11:00 AM

Join Refuge Maintenance Mechanic, Joe Bertrand for a walk into the Maquam Bog on Saturday, February 27, 2016 from 8 AM – 11 AM. Participants should meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd. signed as “Refuge Trails Parking” located about one mile off of RT. 78 on Tabor Rd.

The Maquam Bog is a unique woodland bog habitat that is not found anywhere else in Vermont and in few other places in New England. The winter offers an opportunity to walk over the difficult bog terrain with relative ease as compared to most other times of the year. However, this walk will require some degree of physical exertion and endurance. The bog has historically served as a deer wintering area. Snowshoe hare, short eared owls, and Northern Harriers are known to inhabit the bog.

The walk is dependent on weather conditions. Please call the refuge as the walk date approaches (802-868-4781) to register and receive updates on the status of the walk.

Owl Prowl

March 11, 6:00 to 9:00 PM

Join refuge volunteer and Friends Board members Ken Copenhaver and Julie Filiberti for an evening walk to watch and listen for some of our resident birds who operate during the night shift. An Owl Prowl will be offered to interested refuge visitors this winter.

The owl prowls on Friday evening, March 11, 2016 from 6 PM until 9 PM and will start at the Stephen Young Marsh Trail area. Meet at the parking lot for the trail located on Tabor Rd about one mile past the refuge HQ. Look for roadside signage “Refuge Trails Parking.”

Dress appropriately and bring a low intensity flashlight with you.

Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity.

Vernal Pool Walk

April 15, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Join Park Ranger, David Frisque for a look at the life and activity in a vernal pool early in the spring. Vernal pools are important breeding areas for some of the more reclusive and seldom seen amphibians such as wood frogs and salamanders. Because these temporary wetlands often dry up completely by late summer or early fall, egg laying and early development of juvenile salamanders and frogs must begin early in the spring.

The Vernal Pool walk will be at the Stephen Young Trail area on Friday, April 15, 2016 from 6 PM until 8 PM. Meet at the Parking Lot at the trailhead for the Stephen Young Marsh Trail on Tabor Rd. Bring a small flashlight and waterproof footwear. Call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity.

Woodcock Walk (I)

April 22, 6:30 to 8:30 PM

Join refuge volunteer, Greg Simard on a Woodcock Walk on Friday, April 22, 2016 from 6:30 PM until 8:30 PM. The woodcock walk will be at the Stephen Young Marsh area and participants will meet at the parking area on Tabor Rd. one mile past (south) of the refuge Visitor Center. Woodcock have a unique

courtship display that incorporates an aerial display and ground level calling display which occurs near sunset and into the early evening hours. Join Greg for an enjoyable early evening walk to witness this unique spring time activity.

Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity

Green Up Day**May 6, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM**

The Missisquoi NWR will conduct Refuge Green Up Day on Friday, May 6, 2016. Green Up day will begin at 9 AM and conclude at about noon. All participants should meet at the Louie's Landing Parking Lot on RT 78. The refuge will concentrate its efforts on river cleanup activities using refuge boats. The refuge will monitor river water levels and flows. Should floodplain water levels be excessively high or if flow rates in the river channel are too strong due to snow melt and spring rains, this event may be postponed or canceled.

Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity.

Woodcock Walk (II)**May 6, 7:30 PM to 9:00 PM**

Join Park Ranger, David Frisque for another woodcock walk on Friday, May 6, 2016. The walk will begin at 7:30 PM and end at about 9:00 PM. Once again we will use the Stephen Young Marsh area for this evening walk. Participants will meet at the parking area on Tabor Rd. one mile past (south) of the refuge Visitor Center. Look for roadside signage "Refuge Trails Parking."

Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity.

International Migratory Bird Day & Open House**May 21, 7:30 AM to 2:00 PM**

The Refuge will celebrate the 23rd anniversary of International Migratory Bird Day on Saturday, May 21, 2016. The 2016 IMBD theme is "*Spread Your Wings for Bird Conservation.*" Activities will begin at 7:30 AM with an orientation at the refuge Visitor Center. All birding participants will return to the Visitor Center by 11:30 AM to tally results and have lunch.

The refuge will continue its efforts to document species on the refuge via the refuge trails and waterways using boats and if there is a demand using canoes and kayaks as well. We will record all species and as many individuals within those species as we can and then tally the results over a light lunch.

At approximately 1:00 PM we will have a presentation by Boomer Malanchuk from SUNY Plattsburgh on "Waterfowl Nesting Cavity Research" conducted on the refuge last summer.

Also, the opening of an art exhibit with the theme of "Birds" will take place at 10:00 AM. The exhibit will continue through July 17. For information about entering artworks in the exhibit, see the Friends website.

Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this activity. Also please check back closer to the event date for any changes/additions to the schedule. At this time we are thinking about adding an "Early Bird" bird walk. Check the Friends website calendar for updates: <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/calendar/>

Kids Fishing Clinic**June 4, 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM**

The annual Kids Fishing Clinic is scheduled for Saturday, June 4, 2016 from 8:00 AM until approx. 1:00 PM. This annual event will take place along the Macs Bend Rd from Louie's Landing Parking lot down to the Macs Bend boat launch site, a distance of about 1 mile. Fishing will occur along the banks of the Missisquoi River. Numerous educational and informational venues will be operating near the Macs Bend Building while the fishing is on-going. These include fly casting, fly tying, spincasting, watershed models and demonstrations, a fish ID aquarium, lure making, and an aquatic invasive species display. Children are

encouraged to participate in these activities at some time while they are fishing. A light lunch will be served and a limited number of random drawing prizes will be given away at the end of the event.

Please call 802-868-4781 to register for this popular annual event.

Abenaki Culture Series Feb 26, Mar 11, Apr 29, and May 13, 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM

Join Dr. Fred Wiseman for a series of programs highlighting various cultural aspects of Abenaki life in Vermont. The series started in January on the topic of native American clothing attire in the Northeast. Topics for the remaining programs in the series will be:

- Feb. 26 Indigenous Seeds and Plants
- March 11 Wabanaki Maple Sugaring
- April 29 Skamon: The Abenaki Staff Of Life
- May 13 Wild Plant Resources, Collection and Uses)

All programs are free of charge, and will be presented at the refuge Visitor Center.

Monthly Nature/Photography Walks 1st Saturday of each month, 9:00 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. **Come have fun with us!**

- March 5: Jeep Trail.** Meet at the Louies Landing boat access area. We will drive in to the trail head at Macs Bend.
- April 2: Maquam/Black Creek Trail.** Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.
- May 7: Railroad Trail.** Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge Visitor Center and across the road from the marsh.

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 70 months of walks we have recorded 139 species of birds.** Registration is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

- March 19: Railroad Trail.** Meet at the parking lot on Tabor Rd, about a mile past the refuge Visitor Center and across the road from the marsh.
- April 16: Maquam/Black Creek Trail.** Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.
- May 21: Stephen Young Marsh Trail.** See International Migratory Bird Day info above.

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

We also are planning to do a bird walk this spring at the **Eagle Point Unit** on the shore of Lake Memphremagog. The tentative date is **Saturday, June 11**. A date will be published in the Summer issue of the newsletter and on the website.

8 Presidents Who Shaped America's Public Lands

Excerpted from a U.S. Department of the Interior blog post from 2/12/2016
<https://www.doi.gov/blog/8-presidents-who-shaped-americas-public-lands>

Ever wonder how our public lands system became what it is today? Check out the legacies of eight presidents who made a big difference in American conservation.

Theodore Roosevelt - Created five national parks, 18 national monuments, 51 bird sanctuaries, began the National Wildlife Refuge system, and set aside more than 100 million acres for national forests.

Abraham Lincoln - Signed a law setting aside the Mariposa Grove and Yosemite Valley as protected lands in 1864. Overshadowed by the Civil War, this news received little attention, but it set a significant precedent -- places of scenic and natural importance should be protected for the enjoyment of all people.

Ulysses S. Grant - Set aside the Pribilof Islands in Alaska as a reserve for the northern fur seal. This was the earliest effort to use federally owned land to protect wildlife. In 1872, he signed a law establishing Yellowstone as our nation's first national park.

Woodrow Wilson - In 1916, signed the "Organic Act," creating the bureau responsible for protecting America's 35 already existing national parks and monuments and those yet to be established. Wilson's administration also presided over the creation of several new national parks, including Dinosaur National Monument and Rocky Mountain National Park.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt - Undertook many executive actions to protect and improve public lands. Not only did he create 11 national monuments, his New Deal program -- the Civilian Conservation Corps -- dramatically impacted existing park lands by putting millions of people to work building infrastructure in national parks and forests.

Jimmy Carter - Signed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 into law, setting aside over 104 million acres of land, creating 10 national parks and preserves, two national monuments, nine national wildlife refuges, two national conservation areas, and 25 wild and scenic rivers ensuring that large portions of wilderness remain undeveloped.

Barack Obama - Established 22 national monuments and expanded others to set aside more than 265 million acres of land and water -- that's more than any other president. This includes the expansion of the Pacific Remote Islands Marine National Monument into the largest marine monument in the world, and most recently designating three new national monuments in the California Desert.

Thomas Jefferson - President Thomas Jefferson's public lands legacy centers on the 1803 Louisiana Purchase. Doubling the size of the country, the United States acquired territory that formed 15 new states and included the future sites of many national parks, including Glacier National Park, Yellowstone National Park, and Rocky Mountain National Park.

FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Bi-monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 9, 2016 at 6:30 pm

At the Refuge Visitor Center

Surprisingly, this can be a busy time of year for the Board of Directors as planning for several grants and programs is well underway. All members of the Friends are welcome at the meetings. Topics in March will include preparations for International Migratory Bird Day, the application for our water chestnut control grant, and an update on an interesting new grant we received from the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership. Members are always welcome to attend. Come and see what the board is planning and contribute your ideas.

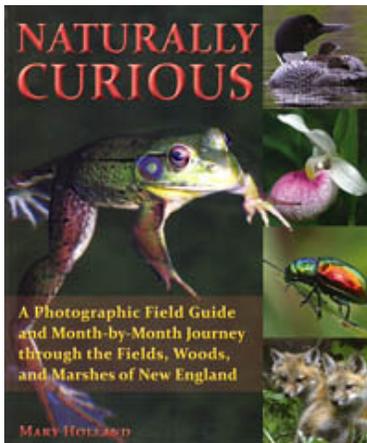
Next meeting: Wednesday, May 11, 2016 at 6:30 pm

The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS GAMES GIFTS TEE SHIRTS HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors



Naturally Curious

A Photographic Field Guide and Month-by-Month Journey through the Fields, Woods, and Marshes of New England

by Mary Holland

\$ 39.95 paper with flaps, 474 pages, 7 1/2 x 9 1/4, full-color photographs

Part handy field guide, part natural history book, this bountiful reference satisfies curiosities about the flora and fauna of New England. Hundreds of spectacular photographs provide a close look at regional animal and plant life, from tracks, dens, and nests to hunting, breeding, and hibernating. This unique nature guide is full of maps, statistics, and quick facts, and also includes in-depth discussions of some of the most interesting nature events New England has to offer.

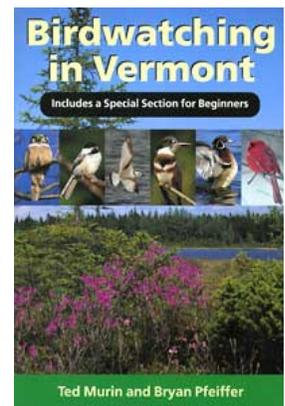
Mary Holland is a naturalist and nature photographer who lives in Hartland, VT.

Birdwatching in Vermont

by Ted Murin & Bryan Pfeiffer

\$ 21.95 paper 192 pages, 6 x 9, b&w photographs, maps

Designed to appeal to expert and backyard birdwatchers alike, this comprehensive guide reveals where, when, and how to watch and enjoy birds in Vermont. It not only offers the latest information about the seasonal status and distribution of birds, but also features a thorough introduction to the art and practice of birdwatching, including optics, ethics, migration, and conservation. Birdwatching in Vermont is packed with expert advice on rare species, Christmas bird counts, the Vermont landscape, and helpful resources for the birdwatcher. This is the essential companion to traditional birdwatching field guides.



Birding for the Curious

The Easiest Way for Anyone to Explore the Incredible World of Birds

by Nate Swick

\$ 21.99 hardcover, 176 pages, 6 1/8 x 9 1/4, full-color photographs, full-color illustrations

This book isn't just for birders. It's also for the huge audience of people who hike, maybe have bird feeders, and generally enjoy nature. With this book, the naturalist will discover an incredible and rewarding new adventure in the beautiful world of birds.

The book is packed with easy and fun activities and information about birds, how to find them, and their part in the nature around us. The information in this book will not only help you identify and learn more about birds, but you'll have a blast doing it. So

not only will you learn things like what kind of birds you're looking at around the neighborhood, how to decipher different bird calls, and how to bring the birds to your backyard, but you'll complete fun activities like creating a list of the most popular birds in your area, creating a sound map of bird calls, and making a feeder for your backyard.

