



## 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

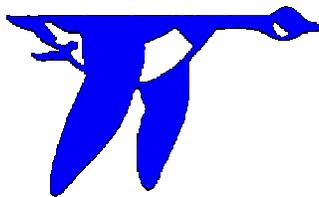
[www.friendsofmissisquoi.org](http://www.friendsofmissisquoi.org)

E-mail: [info@friendsofmissisquoi.org](mailto:info@friendsofmissisquoi.org)

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

## Friends News Shorts

**Bags 4 My Cause** - The Friends of MNWR have been chosen again by

Hannaford Store as the next beneficiary for the **Hannaford Helps Reusable Bag** program. For the month of June, the Friends will receive a \$1 direct donation from each purchase of a reusable bag at the Hannaford store



located at 277 Swanton Road, Highgate Shopping Center in St. Albans. So, support the Friends -- **Buy a few bags ... we get a few bucks!**

**Water Chestnut Grant** – The Friends have again applied for and received a grant from the State of Vermont Agency of Natural Resources for the control of water chestnut on the refuge. Water chestnut is a wetlands invasive species that the refuge has been working hard to control over the past several years. The grant will be used to hire two contract employees again this summer to continue the battle against water chestnut.

**Champlain Valley Heritage Partnership Grant** – The Friends have applied for and received a grant to support a 1-week day camp to be held on the refuge from July 25 to 29. The theme of the camp is **“Ecology and Archaeology Camp: 10,000 Years of the Missisquoi Basin.”** Designed for student ages, 15-18, this camp spotlights classroom, field, and lab experiences that focus on how climate, geology, biology, and human cultures have evolved and adapted to large scale ecological events—from the extinction of Mammoths at the end of the Ice Age, to the coming of colonization 500 years ago.

**Busing Grants** – The Friends are continuing to assist local schools with transportation costs by providing up to \$100 per class trip to the refuge.

**Rusty Blackbird Spring Migration Blitz for 2016** – Again this spring, Vermont birders were asked to report all sightings of Rusty Blackbirds to eBird. The results are in: 761 Rusty Blackbirds were reported to Vermont eBird between March 15th and April 30th compared to 658 in 2015. The highest individual count was 184 Rusty Blackbirds along the refuge’s Railroad Passage Trail on 4/23. This observation along with those of several other observers establishes the refuge as the main stopover point for Rusties in migration in Vermont. Rusty Blackbird populations have experienced a serious decline in recent years. The refuge provides important habitat for this threatened species during migration.

## **Manager's Update – May 2016**

*by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR*

A very different winter but a more typical spring is what I've been ruminating over lately. With such a warm winter I was hoping to see a similar trend in March and April. However with a late April snowfall and plenty of wet weather, spring seems to be resetting the clock on normal weather patterns around the refuge.

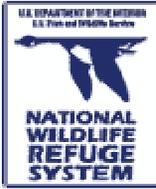
We are once again gearing up for our busy field season and have recently advertised for a temporary biological sciences technician to help with summer field work. The position will be responsible for a variety of tasks including a comprehensive survey of the refuge's floodplain forests for invasive plants. Having an extra biologist on hand this summer will allow the refuge to make some headway on several priority projects including invasive species mapping, monitoring and, most importantly, control. We expect to fill this position shortly.

The refuge is also hiring a Student Conservation Association Intern, Devin Beggs, who will work with the refuge for the summer. Devin graduates in 2016 from Penn State Erie with a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Studies. Devin will be doing a variety of tasks while at the refuge, working both with the biology and visitor services programs. Devin starts at the refuge on June 6.

This year we have been fortunate once again to augment our projects with funding from two different grants. We are lucky to again be working with the Friends of Missisquoi NWR on a grant to control the aquatic invasive plant, water chestnut, on the refuge. This marks the fourth year where the Friends have supported this control operation and to great success. The Friends will be hiring two contract employees who will coordinate their control operations with the refuge and continue to make great strides in managing this invasive plant on the refuge.

Another grant sponsored by the Friends will develop curriculum and put on a summer "camp" at the refuge this summer. The curriculum will be centered on ecology and cultural history of the Missisquoi area. Dr. Fred Wiseman is spearheading the project and will be leading the camp this summer. The idea is to encourage our local youth to learn more about the place they live through cultural and ecological lenses. Thanks to the grant, the camp is entirely free and open to ages 15-18. It will be held the week of July 25<sup>th</sup>. For more information contact the refuge.

There are many great public events coming up including our annual International Migratory Bird Day celebration, Kid's fishing clinic, family paddle day and junior waterfowl training day. Check the refuge events calendar for details. One last encouragement is to get out on the refuge and explore our trails to see and enjoy the changes spring brings. May is a great time to dust off the binoculars and track down all the beautiful birds migrating through Vermont. Bringing your family out to the refuge regularly can be fun to have kids keep track of one or more changes they notice on a trail as the season progresses. As spring turns to summer I hope that all of you will find time in your daily routine to take a morning or afternoon to explore the refuge, truly a gem in our own backyards!



## 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.

### 2016 "Art On the Refuge" Exhibit

May 21 through July 22

The Friends of MNWR will be hosting an Art Exhibit again this year at the Refuge Visitor Center, 29 Tabor Road, Swanton, VT. The exhibit opening will be at 10:00 AM, May 21, coinciding with the International Migratory Bird Day Celebration and Refuge Open House, from 7:30 AM to 2:00 PM.

Works will be focused on birds found on the refuge. Media may include oil, acrylics, watercolor, pen and ink, pastels, photographs, and fabric-related works. Most works will be for sale.

Artwork can also be viewed and purchased during normal refuge office hours through July 22, 2016, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

### Kids Fishing Clinic

Saturday, 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 Mac's Bend Rd from Louie's Landing Parking lot down to the Mac's 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 Mac's 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.

### Geology and Natural History of the Missisquoi Delta

Sunday, June 5

Explore the Missisquoi Delta and the processes that create and shape the delta wetlands, and learn about Missisquoi Bay's water quality challenges with local ecologist and Friends board member Russ Ford. The event is co-sponsored by the Friends of Missisquoi NWM and the Northern Forest Canoe Trail. Suitable for intermediate level paddlers. We'll paddle a 12 mile flatwater loop with the possibility of headwinds for part of the trip. Bring your own canoe or kayak, PFD, lunch, and clothing appropriate for the weather.

The paddle will begin at 9:00 AM. Ending time depends on weather and paddling speed of the participants, but it is expected to last well into the afternoon.

Contact Russ Ford to pre-register and for further details at [russell.f.ford@gmail.com](mailto:russell.f.ford@gmail.com).

### Eagle Point WMA Bird Walk

Saturday, June 11, 8:00 to 10:00 AM

The Friends, in partnership with the Memphremagog Watershed Association, will be holding a Bird Walk at the Eagle Point Wildlife Management Area. The walk will be from 8:00 to 10:00 AM on June 11, 2016. Anyone from northwestern Vermont who wishes to carpool to Eagle Point can meet at 6:30 AM at the Enosburg Falls Park & Ride on Rt 105, about .2 miles west of Enosburg Falls.

Located along the Canadian border just north of Newport City, Eagle Point WMA is owned by the US Fish and Wildlife Service and is officially part of the Missisquoi NWR. It is managed by the Vermont Fish &

Wildlife Department in partnership with the refuge. Eagle Point is a 420 acre parcel consisting of nearly a mile of lakeshore habitat, numerous wetlands, large meadows, hemlock and mixed forest. It supports a great diversity of wildlife including aquatic mammals, waterfowl, grassland birds, and many other wetland and terrestrial species.

Please email Ken Copenhaver at [copenhvr@gmail.com](mailto:copenhvr@gmail.com) if you plan to attend the walk or need more information. We would like to have an idea of how many people are coming and how many to expect for carpooling. Thank you. Hope to see you there!

Optionally, for anyone who wants to make a day of it, some of us are tentatively planning to bird a few more spots after the walk, possibly Moose Bog or Silvio Conte NWR. All are welcome to join us!

**Ecology and Archaeology Camp****Monday to Friday, July 25 to 29**

Join us for a week-long summer day camp at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge for a celebration of its unique culture and environment since the Glaciers receded at the end of the last Ice Age. Designed for students ages 15-18, this camp spotlights classroom, field and lab experiences that focus on how climate, geology, biology and human cultures have evolved and adapted to large scale ecological events — from extinction of Mammoths at the end of the Ice Age, to the coming of colonization 500 years ago.

This field experience is entirely free for students ages 15-18; all that is necessary is to have transportation to and from the Refuge and to bring one's own lunch. Registration is limited; first come first served; SIGN UP EARLY!

SUPPORTED BY THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP, THE FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NWR, MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, AND THE WÔBANAKIK HERITAGE CENTER.

**Monthly Nature/Photography Walks****1<sup>st</sup> 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. The schedule for the next three months is:

- June 4: 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.
- July 2: Maquam/Black Creek Trail.** Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.
- August 6: 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.

**Other Summer 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](http://www.friendsofmissisquoi.org) and click on "Calendar."**

**For more information about the refuge, visit [www.fws.gov/refuge/missisquoi/](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/missisquoi/)**

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

**June 18: 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.

**July 16: Maquam/Black Creek Trail.** Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton.

**August 20: Jeep Trail.** Meet at the Louie's Landing boat access area on Rte 78. We will drive in to the trail head at Mac's Bend.

## FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

### Bi-monthly Board Meeting

**Wednesday, July 13, 2016 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, September 14, 2016 at 6:30 pm**

## eBird Trail Tracker

Have you ever wondered what bird species people have been seeing on the refuge? It's easy with the eBird Trail Tracker. Just go to the **eBird Sightings** page of the Friends website: <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/ebird/> Here you'll see a list of all the birds that have been reported to eBird on and near the refuge for the past 30 days. The most recent sightings are listed first. Click on the **map** link next to a species to see exactly where on the refuge it was seen.

When using eBird to report birds seen on the refuge, be sure to select one of the "hot spots:" on and near the refuge. Personal locations that you have created won't be included in eBird Trail Tracker. Hot spots on the refuge are:

- Campbell's Bay / Mouth of Charcoal Creek
- Carman's Marsh WMA / Sandy Point
- Hog Island
- Missisquoi Bay (southeast) / Goose and Gander Bays
- Missisquoi Bay Bridge
- Missisquoi NWR IBA
- Missisquoi NWR – Charcoal Creek
- Missisquoi NWR – Dead Creek
- Missisquoi NWR – Mac's Bend and Jeep Trail
- Missisquoi NWR – Maquam and Black Creek Trails
- Missisquoi NWR – Maquam Bog / Old Railroad Passage
- Missisquoi NWR – Mouth of River / Tip of Delta
- Missisquoi NWR – Overlook Parking Area
- Missisquoi NWR – Stephen Young Marsh
- Missisquoi NWR – headquarters vicinity / Discovery Trail

## Northward Bound

by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

Everyone's moving north, or so it seems these days. With springtime migration in full swing, it's hard to say who will appear next. Although signs of spring are everywhere, they're often distinctly different, depending on your perspective of *north*.

If you see a blur of teeny yellow butts constantly in motion, you'll know that spring is here (or at least near!). Yellow-rumped Warblers—easily recognized by four distinct yellow patches on their head, sides, and rump—are the Paul Reveres of spring in Vermont. After migrating sometimes 200 miles per night, from places south in Central America or the United States, yellow-rumps are keen, bug-eating machines that flit from tree to tree in search of food. Let's face it, not everyone has the gusto to survive unpredictable April weather. If insects aren't abundant, the resilient rumps of yellow have a trick: They eat waxy berries—something that other warblers just can't do!

While Vermont is seeing yellow, the high Arctic is noticing nothing but white (in more ways than one). Our winter birds—snow buntings—are their sprites of spring! Migrating long distances, snow buntings breed in the barren tundra of Canada, Iceland, Greenland, and the North Pole. Completely undeterred by the -20 F temperatures, snow-covered ground, and intermittent blizzards, bachelor buntings have one thing on their minds and a few tricks up their wings. Although they haven't molted, male snow buntings no longer have their brown feather tips of winter. How do they do that? By rubbing their wings in the snow, they wear off the

tips—revealing a spiffy springtime suit of black-and-white!

Evidently, “all you need is love” rings true for snow buntings. Despite harsh weather and conditions, males go all out performing courtship displays to attract females. What goes up must come down, and male snow buntings do too. For a good first impression, males fly 20-30 feet in the air then glide back down while singing. That's multi-tasking at its best! If that doesn't get her attention, the male spreads his wings and tail to show his colors, then turns his back, and runs away...smooth.

Mind-boggling male snow buntings are jacks-of-all-trades that seem to be up for any and all challenges. Nesting in rock cracks and crevices to avoid predators isn't for the faint of heart. To take away the chill, male snow buntings turn into meticulous

housekeepers—lining nests with thick layers of fur, grasses, and feathers to keep the eggs warm. Once incubation starts, males quickly become caterers, conscientiously feeding females so they can stay on the nest to keep it even warmer. It seems a male snow buntings' work is never done!

Spring migration, in all of its glory, again reminds me that the birds we're seeing and enjoying aren't just “our” birds. Instead, we share them with many other people and places on the planet. Some of these birds, literally, are here today and gone tomorrow, doing what they came to do, and then moving on. So wherever you are, enjoy the northward-bound messengers of spring...and their sweet songs of warmer days to come.



Snow Bunting – Winter plumage



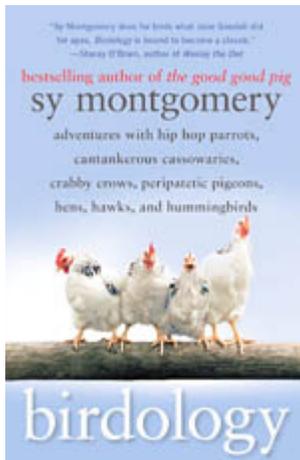
Snow Bunting – Summer plumage

# The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS GAMES GIFTS TEE SHIRTS HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors



## Birdology

**Adventures with Hip Hop Parrots, Cantankerous Cassowaries, Crabby Crows, Peripatetic Pigeons, Hens, Hawks, and Hummingbirds**

Sy Montgomery

**\$ 15.00**, paper, 260 pages, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, b&w photographs

**Sy Montgomery shows us the essence of birds—by blending popular science with her characteristically entertaining encounters with some very distinctive avian personalities.**

"There could be no better guide to the wonder of birds than Sy Montgomery.... [She] unlocks some of the secrets of how and what birds may be thinking. Read it, and you will never look at a parrot, chicken, hawk or pigeon in quite the same way again."—Julie Zickefoose, NPR commentator; author of *Letters from Eden*

*Birdology* explains just how very "other" birds are: Their hearts look like those of crocodiles. They are covered with modified scales, which are called feathers. Their bones are hollow. Their bodies are permeated with extensive air sacs. They have no hands. They give birth to eggs. Yet despite birds' and humans' disparate evolutionary paths, we share emotional and intellectual abilities that allow us to communicate and even form deep bonds. When we begin to comprehend who birds really are, we deepen our capacity to approach, understand, and love these otherworldly creatures. And this, ultimately, is the priceless lesson of *Birdology*: it communicates a heartfelt fascination and awe for birds and restores our connection to these complex, mysterious fellow creatures.

## The Bug Book & Bug Bottle

**How to Catch, Identify, and Care for Insects and Other Creepy Crawlies**

**An Illustrated Field Guide & Activity Book**

Hugh Danks, Ph.D.

**\$ 16.95**, boxed kit

bottle: 5 1/2 x 5 1/4 x 2 1/2, book: 110 pages, 5 x 4 1/2, full-color illustrations, includes magnifier, bug chart, bug journal. Ages 8 and up



Kids are crazy about bugs! And kids and parents are crazy about *The Bug Book & Bug Bottle*. Packed with activities and packaged in its own collecting bottle, the original *Bug Book* is now revised, updated, and expanded: Announcing the almost-all-new, more-bugs-than-ever edition.

The ingeniously designed, safe plastic bottle is perfect for catching and viewing creepy crawlies, then letting them go unharmed. (This is a bug kit with a conscience!) The full-color book provides field notes to 46 bugs (up from the original 24) arranged by habitat, including pond, forest, ground, leaves, field, flower. Written by entomologist Hugh Danks, *The Bug Book* gives comprehensive information about these fascinating creatures—how they live, what they eat, unusual characteristics, and more. It offers simple, clear guidelines on how to collect and care for bugs, and equally helpful hints on which bugs not to catch. New to the kit are a fold-out bug chart for quick identification, a magnifier to see the critters up close, and a bug explorer's journal to record discoveries.