



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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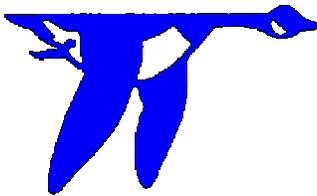
www.friendsofmissisquoi.org

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Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

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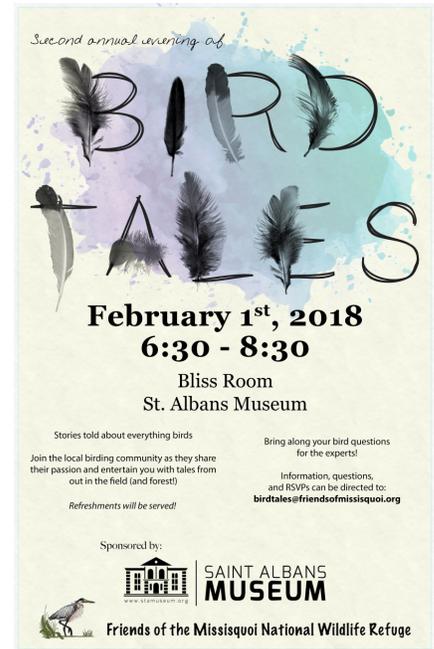
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MNWR Visitor Center hours
are Monday thru Friday
8:00am – 4:30pm

Friends Present Second Annual “Bird Tales” Program

On the evening of February 1, the Friends of Missisquoi NWR presented their 2nd Annual “Bird Tales” program at the St. Albans Museum. Again, people from the Vermont birding community told personal stories about their birding experiences. The event was a great success with over 50 people attending. Speakers included:

- Ken Sturm, the refuge manager, who started the evening with an overview of the refuge and its importance in migratory bird conservation.
- Bridget Butler told about her experience in learning to do amazingly-convincing Barred Owl calls.
- Mark Paul, a bird videographer, showed a few of his video clips and told the stories behind getting them.
- Zac Cota told about how he got into birding and how he challenged himself to find as many bird species in Vermont as he could in one year.
- Ali Wagner told her heartwarming story of finding a Common Loon chick that was unaccountably far from water and its subsequent rescue and successful rehabilitation.
- Julie Filiberti read a few of her favorite bird-and nature-related poems, including one she had written.



The Friends provided light refreshments, bird feeders were for sale made from maple syrup jugs by VTBirdFeeders, and Mark Paul’s bird video DVD’s were for sale, the profits from which were generously donated to the Friends.

Much of the credit for the program’s success goes to David Southwick, who made the arrangements with the museum as the venue and promoted the event in many ways. The Friends very much appreciate the opportunity to use the museum. Thanks also to Hanna Filiberti, daughter of Friends board member Julie Filiberti, who designed the attractive poster used to promote the event. And the Friends very much appreciate the support of the refuge staff who helped with the event.

Refuge Manager's Update – February 2018

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR

Winter is typically a season where things slow down a bit at the refuge. Our staff takes a breather and reflects on the previous season and begins planning for the next. To a large extent this is what we have been doing this winter, although there has been much to keep us busy. Our biologist, Judy has been working on the refuge's Habitat Management Plan. This document sets a plan for how the refuge will manage the various habitats on the refuge to meet specific wildlife objectives. It's a daunting task but one well suited for the winter months.

Our Park Ranger, Dave, has been working on outreach for the annual Junior Duck Stamp program. This state-wide program encourages teachers to work with students to learn about wetlands and waterfowl. The project culminates as the students submit original artwork to the refuge for an art contest. The winner of the contest competes for the national honor of being the Junior Duck Stamp for 2018. But better yet is the process undertaken by students to learn about waterfowl and the importance of wetland and wildlife conservation. If you are interested in this program, please contact Dave Frisque at our office (802-868-4781).

Birding can be a bit slow during the winter, but this year has been a bit unusual. Thanks to a Snowy Owl who has been making her home at the refuge along Tabor Road, we have seen much more traffic and visitors than usual in the last two months. This juvenile Snowy Owl has been made famous on social media lately and is very photogenic – I have seen almost daily posts of this owl on the Vermont Birding Facebook site (as well as good views out my office window)! Interestingly this owl had green markings on its wings, which turns out to be a mark from a wildlife rehabilitation center in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, about 60 miles north of the refuge. We are fortunate to have such a long-term visitor from the north who seems to be enjoying the hunting opportunities in refuge grasslands! It's also nice to know that this bird seems to be doing just fine after getting well at a rehabilitation center.

The winter also brought ice jamming and flooding to the local community and parts of the refuge along route 78. This emergency was a reminder to review and reauthorize the refuge's Mutual Aid Agreement with the towns of Highgate and Swanton. This agreement allows both towns and the refuge to share resources during natural disasters and other emergencies. Though not required this time around it was good to ensure these agreements are in place for any future emergency needs.

As for the refuge, two parking lots along route 78 were flooded and subsequently froze solid. Thanks to VTRANS and the town of Swanton, the Black/Maquam Trail parking area was opened up and used as a staging area for emergency response operations during and directly after the flood. However, the Louie's Landing parking lot and Mac's Bend Road are still covered in ice. It's likely we won't be able to clear the ice until a persistent thaw. Damage to the parking areas and Mac's Bend Road will surely require attention this spring once the ice melts, but we are fortunate to have escaped much of the damage that our neighbors are still dealing with.



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.

Owl Prowl

Friday, March 16, 7:00 to 9:00 PM

Join refuge volunteer and Friends Board member, Ken Copenhaver for an evening walk to watch and listen for some of our resident birds who operate during the night shift. An Owl Prowl will start at the Stephen Young Marsh Trail area. Meet at the parking lot for the trail located on Tabor Road, about one mile past the refuge Visitor Center. Look for roadside signage "Refuge Trails Parking." Dress appropriately and bring a low intensity flashlight.

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

Vernal Pool Walk

Friday, April 13, 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. Meet at the parking lot for the trail located on Tabor Road, about one mile past the refuge Visitor Center. Look for roadside signage "Refuge Trails Parking." Bring a small flashlight and wear waterproof footwear.

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

Woodcock Walk

Friday, April 20, 6:30 to 8:30 PM

Join refuge volunteer, Greg Simard on a Woodcock Walk at the Stephen Young Marsh area. Woodcock have a unique courtship display that incorporates an aerial display and a ground level calling display that occurs near sunset and into the early evening hours. Join Greg for an enjoyable early evening walk to witness this unique spring time behavior. Meet at the parking lot for the trail located on Tabor Road, about one mile past the refuge Visitor Center.

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

Woodcock Walk

Friday, May 4, 7:30 to 9:00 PM

Join Park Ranger, David Frisque for another Woodcock Walk at the Stephen Young Marsh area. Meet at the parking lot for the trail located on Tabor Road, about one mile past the refuge Visitor Center.

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

Refuge Green Up Day

Friday, May 4, 9:00 AM to approx 12:00 PM

The Missisquoi NWR will conduct a Refuge Green Up Day. The refuge will concentrate its efforts on river cleanup activities using refuge boats. Refuge staff 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. Participants will meet at the Louie's Landing Parking Lot on Rte 78, about 3.5 miles west of Swanton village.

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

2018 "Art on the Refuge" Reception**Friday, May 18, 5:30 to 6:30 PM**

Our annual "Art on the Refuge" exhibit opens on Friday, May 18th with an artists' reception at the Refuge Visitor Center. Stop by to meet and chat with the artists who are exhibiting their work in the refuge art show. Artwork will be displayed through July 20. Light refreshments will be served.

Bird Talk by Maeve Kim**Friday, May 18, 6:30 to 8:00 PM**

As a prelude to World Migratory Bird Day (see next event), Maeve Kim will give a presentation the evening before titled "Nature's Super-Habitats: Wetland Conservation and the National Wildlife Refuge System." Maeve is an avid birder and knowledgeable about many aspects of bird life and behavior. The presentation will be held at the refuge Visitor Center.

World Migratory Bird Day**Saturday, May 19, 7:30 AM to approx 2:00 PM**

The Refuge will celebrate World Migratory Bird Day (formerly known as International Migratory Bird Day) on Saturday, May 19, 2018. The WMBD theme this year is "Year of the Bird," marking 2018 as the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Activities will begin at 7:30 AM with an orientation at the refuge Visitor Center. Participants will split up into several boat trips and bird walks, during which we will record all bird species and count as many individuals within those species as we can identify. All birding participants will return to the Visitor Center by 11:30 AM to tally results over a light lunch provided by the Friends.

At approximately 1:00 PM, Dave Adams from the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department will give a presentation on "Wildlife Habitat Improvement."

Throughout the day, an exhibit of artworks from local artists will be on display at the Visitor Center. The exhibit will run through mid-July. Further information on entering works in the exhibit will be available on the Friends website www.friendsofmissisquoi.org in the near future.

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. We will probably also be doing an "Early Bird" bird walk like we did for the past 2 years. Check the Friends website calendar for further information and updates: <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/calendar/>

2018 "Art On the Refuge" Exhibit**May 19 through July 20**

The Friends of MNWR is hosting an Art Exhibit again this year at the Refuge Visitor Center. Works will be focused on birds and nature 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 be viewed and purchased during normal refuge office hours through July 20, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

Kids Fishing Clinic**Saturday, June 2, 8:00 AM to approx 1:00 PM**

The annual Kids Fishing Clinic will take place along the Macs Bend Road from Louie's Landing parking lot down to the Macs Bend boat launch site, a distance of about 1 mile. Fishing will take place 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.

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 95 months of walks we have recorded 151 species of birds.** (In December we added Snow Bunting to our species list.) Registration for the walks is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

March 17: 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 21: Maquam/Black Creek Trail. Meet at the parking lot located on Rte 78 approx. 2 ½ miles west of Swanton village.

May 19: Stephen Young Marsh Trail. See World Migratory Bird Day info above.

Other Spring 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.

The Deer

The Deer stands alone,
He sniffs the air,
He hopes to smell sweet apples.
It is fall,
The hunters are out,
Hide in the woods,
and sleep on a moss bed.

The Owl

The owl sits alone,
He looks around,
It is a good day,
He will hunt for mice,
And feed his young family.

Poems by Joan Frey, used with permission

FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Bi-monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 14, 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, May 9, 2018 at 6:30 pm

This Snow Has Fleas

by Judy Sefchick Edwards, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

It's a brisk February day, but the sun is shining and the wind is still. Walking in the woods, I notice some tiny black specks on the snow. At first glance, it looks like bits of bark or tree, but on closer inspection, I see the specks are *moving*. Oh-oh, that's when I realize--*this snow has fleas!* Don't start itching just yet. The black specks are *snow fleas* and aren't related to fleas at all. They don't bite, transmit disease, or bother humans, pets, or wildlife. In fact these tiny winter wonders do more good than harm, and are an important part of nature's cycle.



Related to insects, but fundamentally distinct, snow fleas are a specialized group of small, six-legged arthropods called *springtails*. Interestingly, they've survived life on earth for 400 million years by having the unique ability to withstand extreme conditions. By having proteins that act as antifreeze, snow fleas don't have to worry about Vermont's freezing temperatures or getting frostbite!

To the casual observer, snow fleas may look lifeless, since they're flightless and usually slow-moving. What they don't realize, however, is that these speed-fleas can m-o-v-e when they need to. A spring-like mechanism on their abdomen can catapult them high into the air, sometimes by as much as twelve inches! What a surprise from a

creature just one-eighth of an inch in size! Granted, they can't control their springing height, flight, or direction, and sometimes land exactly where they started—but why run, when you can just spring into action?

If you want to find snow fleas, try venturing out on a sunny day. Look for areas of melting snow at the base of a tree, the indentation of footprints, or the tracks of a cross-country ski. These areas provide easy access to the

snow's surface, where all self-respecting snow fleas really want to be. Once there, snow fleas can have the time of their lives--basking in sunshine, indulging in microscopic matter, looking for mates, or congregating for the next mass migration. Who knew these miniscule marvels had such an active social life?

Walking the trails at Missisquoi is a great way to appreciate the signs and tracks of winter. For those less-inclined, why not wait for a warmer sunny day, like me...and just track snow fleas? Seeing springing snow fleas, on an otherwise quiet landscape, is guaranteed to bring a smile to even those with cabin fever. Who knows—after seeing them, you may even be thankful for the snow? Don't worry, I won't tell anyone that I saw you out there, having fun, once you see that *this snow has fleas!*

eBird on the Refuge in 2017

In 2017, 995 checklists were submitted for the refuge and adjacent area by 122 people, for a total of 216 species. That's a lot of birds and a lot of birding! If you're not already submitting your bird sightings to eBird, please consider doing so. The data is used by many researchers to better understand bird population trends and other research important for protecting birds.

The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS

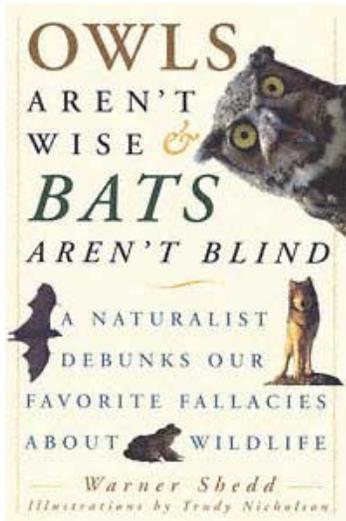
GAMES

GIFTS

TEE SHIRTS

HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors



Owls Aren't Wise and Bats Aren't Blind

A Naturalist Debunks Our Favorite Fallacies About Wildlife

Warner Shedd, Illustrated by Trudy Nicholson

\$ 16.00, paper 336 pages, 6 1/8 x 9 1/4, b&w illustrations

Ever pick up a toad only to have it soak your hand? Don't worry, it was the animal's emergency water storage (not urine!), dumped in a fight-or-flight panic. Think that new beaver clan will dent the trout population in your favorite fishing hole? They don't touch the stuff: beavers are strictly vegetarian. And go ahead, get close to that porcupine, because they can't fire quills like an AK-47. Want more? Warner Shedd, a native Vermonter, lifelong naturalist, former Forest Service honcho, and a retired executive for the National Wildlife Federation, dispels wildlife fallacies that have passed through generations of well-intended grandfathers and poorly

informed folk tales. Shedd covers everything about most backyard critters—from gray squirrels to newts—and expands on some wilder species that we only think we understand.

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

by Sy Montgomery

\$ 16.00 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.

