



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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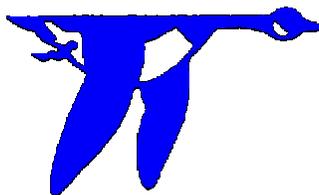
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Newsletter edited by Ken Copenhaver

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

Trail Cards Challenge To Start by September 1

As reported in the Summer issue of Missisquoi Matters, the Friends of Missisquoi will be starting a new “Trail Cards” challenge. By September 1, boxes will be installed on each of the five refuge trails. In each box are trail cards and a unique hole punch. Trail cards are also available at the Friends Gift Shop at the Refuge Visitor Center on Tabor Road.



When you locate the box on each trail, punch out the trail’s respective space on your card. Once you’ve hiked all five trails and acquired all five unique punches on your card, return to the Gift Shop during operating hours to claim your prize – a unique sew-on patch (pictured above), created specifically for the Trail Card Challenge, and only available to those intrepid individuals who have conquered all 5 trails!

The trails are: Black/Maquam Creek Trail, Discovery Trail, Jeep Trail, Old Railroad Passage Trail, and Stephen J Young Marsh Trail. Good luck on your Trail Card quest!

Bags 4 My Cause - The Friends of MNWR were chosen again by the Hannaford Store in St. Albans as the beneficiary for the **Hannaford Helps Reusable Bag** program. The Friends received \$52 for 52 bags sold during the month of June. We appreciate the support Hannaford has repeatedly given to the Friends through this program.

Missisquoi NWR featured on VPR – On August 4, Vermont Public Radio aired a segment featuring the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge. Lynn McCrae from VPR interviewed refuge manager Ken Sturm as they took a canoe trip from Mac’s Bend to Cranberry Pool. In the segment, Ken gives a compelling account of the ecological importance of Cranberry Pool in particular and the refuge in general.

If you didn’t catch it when it was aired, you can listen to the segment or read the transcript at: <http://digital.vpr.net/post/missisquoi-national-wildlife-refuge-sights-and-sounds-wetlands-canoe-tour>

Refuge Manager's Update – August 2018

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR

With fall peeking around the corner as I write this, it's hard to believe we are in the middle of August already. The field season has been fast and furious this year, not to mention HOT and DRY, which has made most field work a bit difficult. As the lake level drops, refuge wetlands become more and more difficult to access making biological surveys and management much more challenging.

This was definitely true for the water chestnut contractors who were funded by the Friends of Missisquoi NWR through a grant from the Lake Champlain Basin Program. This was the 6th year in which the Friends have helped the refuge manage the highly invasive and damaging water chestnut plant on the refuge through grants and contract labor support. We can't thank the Friends of Missisquoi NWR enough for this steadfast support. This year, contractors covered over 350 acres of wetland habitat, largely by canoe, removing 687 water chestnut plants from the refuge. This is up from 2017 when only 447 rosettes were pulled, a rather alarming increase considering that 2017 was covered much more efficiently by motor boat.

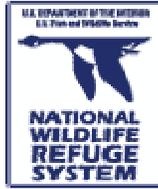
Other projects for the summer included conducting native bumblebee surveys, monitoring a variety of wildlife species, conducting extensive invasive species control in grassland and shrubland habitat, and many other maintenance tasks too numerous to list here.

What I want to write about most is the retirement of our long-time Park Ranger, Dave Frisque. Many of you had worked with Dave in the past or participated in one of his programs or refuge tours. Dave retired on June 29 of this year after 42 years in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dave's career took him to seven different stations with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in six different states. His stint at Missisquoi was his longest stay, where he became the backbone of the refuge's public use program. At Missisquoi, Dave was passionate about teaching young people to care about wildlife and conservation at every level. He was continually working with school groups and camps, interns and volunteers to connect them to the refuge and to wildlife. A common sight at the refuge visitor's center over the years was a line of young school children following Dave down the Discovery Trail. (I secretly called him the "mamma duck" as a result of this phenomenon!) I know all the Friends of Missisquoi NWR reading this surely appreciated his work and commitment to the refuge, environmental education, and conservation. We wish him well on his new adventures!



Dave Frisque teaching aquatic invertebrates



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.

2018 "Big Sit!"

Saturday, October 13, dawn to dusk

The Friends of MNWR will be holding their second annual "Big Sit!" at the Stephen J. Young Marsh observation platform. We plan to have observers present from dawn until dusk on Saturday, October 13.

What is a Big Sit!? It's an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event organized by the Bird Watcher's Digest magazine. 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 platform at Stephen Young Marsh is well within the 17-foot limit. In 2017 we watched from 6:00 AM to 6:30 PM and observed 35 species—not bad for October.

Come join us for the whole day, for an hour or two, or just stop in and say hello. Located on Tabor Rd, about 1 mile south of the refuge Visitor Center.

Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks

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

Friends of MNWR members Ken Copenhaver and Julie Filiberti 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 100 months of walks we have recorded 156 species of birds.** Registration for the walks is not required. The schedule for the next three months is:

September 15: 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.

October 20: 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.

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

Other Fall 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.

Refuge Trail Closures and Advisories for Fall Hunting Seasons

Discovery Trail, Old Railroad Trail, and Stephen J. Young Marsh Trail are closed this year:

Nov 3-4	Youth Deer Weekend
Nov 10-25	Regular Deer Season
Dec 1-9	Muzzleloader Season

Trail Advisories are posted to advise hikers and users that the area is open to hunting and to proceed with caution on the following trails and dates:

Jeep Trail: Oct 13-Dec. 9 Waterfowl Season

Discovery Trail, Old Railroad Trail, and Stephen J. Young Marsh Trail:

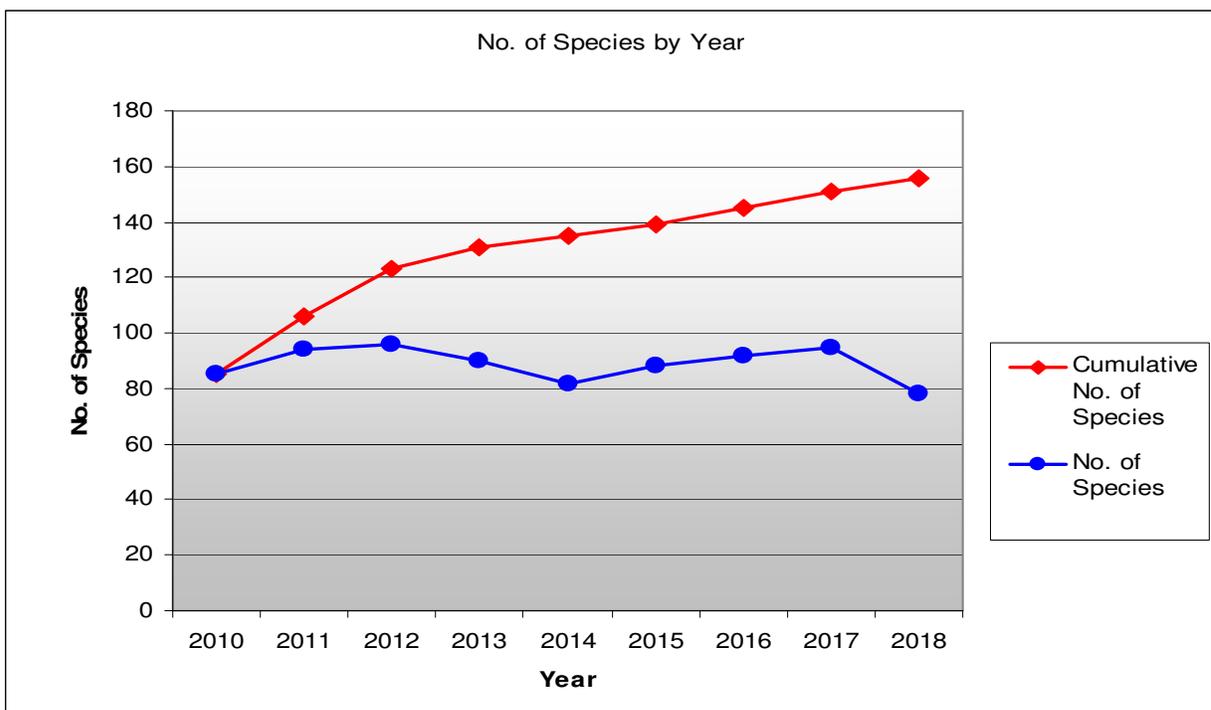
Oct 6 – Nov 2 & Dec 1 – 9	Archery Season
Sep 29, 2018 – Mar 10, 2019	Upland Game Season

Friends of MNWR Completes Their 100th Monthly Bird Monitoring Walk

On July 21st, the Friends reached a milestone of 100 Bird Monitoring Walks. Started in March of 2010 by Bridget Butler and Ken Copenhaver, the walks have continued monthly throughout the years. When Bridget could no longer lead walks due to her work schedule, Julie Filiberti took her place. In over 8 years, only one walk needed to be canceled—that due to the ice storm in December 2013.

To date 1100 participants have attended the walks, observing 156 species and a total of over 15,000 individual birds. As a testimony to the diversity of birds on the refuge, new species continue to be added to the list. So far in 2018, five new species were added (Orchard Oriole in May, Eastern Bluebird and Yellow-billed Cuckoo in June, and Carolina Wren and Palm Warbler in July). Six new species were added in each of the previous two years. Below is a graph showing each year’s species count and the ever-increasing total number of species. (Note that there are only 7 months of data for 2018.)

When will we run out of new species to be found? Come to the walks and find out!



The Blob

by Judy Sefchick, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR

Another day at the refuge means another close encounter of the *strange* kind. Walking along the Black Creek Trail, I notice something out of the ordinary. A closer look reveals a big, brown, bizarre-looking ball that's lurking underwater. Hmm...could it be an egg mass from a gigantic, genetically engineered frog? Or is it a discarded Jello recipe-gone-wrong that floated in with flood waters? Whatever's going on here, one thing seems certain—*The Blob* is alive and well at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge!



Photo of Bryozoan taken at Maquam Creek on 8/5/2018.

There's no need to panic, or alert the townspeople, just yet. Although it looks like something alien, this brain-shaped gelatinous blob isn't sinister, deadly, or from another planet. In fact, bryozoans are as harmless as they are remarkable. Filtering water and minding their own business for around 500 million years, bryozoans are some of the oldest known creatures on earth!

The phrase, "Don't judge a book by its cover," rings true for bryozoans. What looks like a disgusting ball of slime on the outside, in no way reflects the complex colonial organism on the inside. In fact, each bryozoan contains hundreds of individuals living cooperatively, much like a colony of bees. Tiny, filter-feeding invertebrates, called zooids, make up each bryozoan colony. Depending on the species of bryozoan, their zooids may have specialized functions (feeding, defense, or reproduction) or all share the same jobs.

Zooids are interesting in and of themselves, since each has cells, tissues, and organs, so it can feed and reproduce independently. Only one zooid is needed to start a bryozoan colony. After all, zooids can

replicate themselves through asexual reproduction, sometimes doubling their numbers every four days. It's no wonder that *The Blob* seems to consume everything in its path!

Why are bryozoans here? Although they look tough on the outside, fragile bryozoans need still or slow-moving water to stay in one gelatinous mass. Because

they're motionless, bryozoans require anchors (rocks or submerged trees) to attach themselves to, for a stable, underwater existence. In addition, freshwater bryozoans thrive in nutrient-rich waters with plenty of algae and detritus to eat. With the waters of Missisquoi NWR containing all of these things and more, it's no wonder bryozoans consider it a virtual heaven- on-earth!

Despite there being around 4,000 species worldwide, bryozoans aren't well known. With only about 50 freshwater species, I consider myself lucky to be around them. The next time you're walking along the Missisquoi River, or paddling in Dead Creek, take a moment to look for some amazing, ancient bryozoans. There's no need to worry—*The Blob* here isn't part of some science fiction horror story...at least we hope not!

A Birder's Ode

By Julie Filiberti

Gather round my little treasures, feathered gems gleaming in the sky.
We birders cherish each of you and aspire to tell you why.
For each of you, and all your kin, from places far and wide,
Are our relaxation, our "raison d'être", our passion, and our pride.
Your countenance, it thrills us, sheer brilliance to behold,
Fanciful feathering donning rubies, indigos, and golds.
Decked and dapper, precisely preened, iridescent in the sun,
You serve as candy to our eyes, handsomeness never quite outdone.
You grace us with your music, melodic food for our weary souls.
Each song a welcome harmony that succeeds to make us whole.
We marvel at your multitudes, find fancy in your legions.
We scan the skies to watch you gather and move us through the seasons.
When autumn comes and you head south, you leave us in despair.
We plan vacations to follow your path with hopes to find you there.
And in the spring, when you return, our blues subside and melt,
And our smiles broaden with each new find – true jubilation is felt.
You fill us all with wonder, raise questions in our minds,
You amaze us, yet confound us, and surprise us all the time.
We awe at your existence despite the grave dangers you face,
Making your majestic migrations or just moving from place to place.
We see you soar at such great heights, playful in currents that you love,
And we dream to be graceful birds like you, gazing down from high above.
We live to count you, and to list you, and to look you up in books.
We patiently wait for hours and days just to get "great looks".
Whether you're familiar at the feeder, or strange and out of range,
We're at peace to just behold you, a love that will never change.
We call ourselves "birders" and "birding" is what we do,
But you are the root of the word and the love, and it's you we're indebted to.

FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Bi-monthly Board Meeting

Wednesday, September 12, 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.

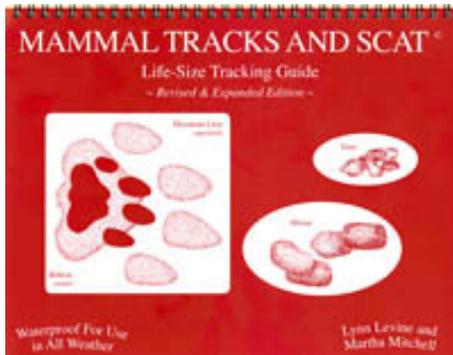
Next meeting: Wednesday, November 14, 2018 at 6:30 pm

The Friends' Store

at the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge

BOOKS GAMES GIFTS TEE SHIRTS HATS

for people of all ages who love the outdoors



Mammal Tracks and Scat Life-Size Tracking Guide

Lynn Levine

Illustrated by Martha Mitchell

\$ 19.95, spiralbound

24 pages, 11 x 8 1/2, two-color illustrations

By moving alongside a set of animal tracks, or finding scat, you can discover whether the creature climbed a tree, found a mate, or

marked its territory. *Mammal Tracks and Scat* is a life-size, waterproof tracking guide that will help turn your tracking adventure into a magical experience. The illustrations are actual size, making it much easier to compare drawings in this guide with tracks and scat in the field. This field guide is designed to be carried through brush, bramble, and snow, and still emerge unscathed. In a handy spiralbound format, *Mammal Tracks and Scat* can be laid on the ground for simple comparison with the actual track or scat.

Identifying Animal Tracks

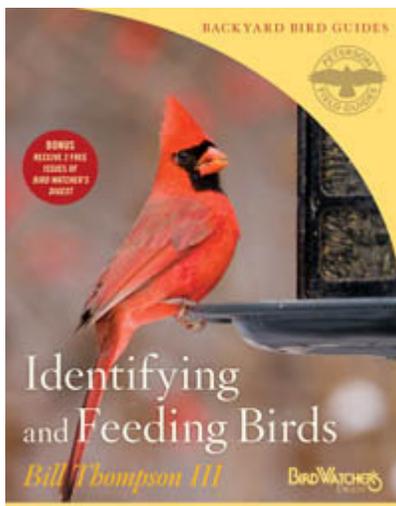
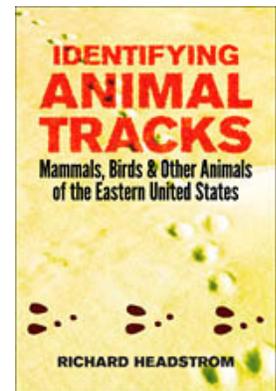
Mammals, Birds & Other Animals of the Eastern United States

Richard Headstrom

\$ 9.95, paper

142 pages, 5 3/8 x 8, b&w illustrations

Hunters, naturalists, scouts, and nature lovers will appreciate this comprehensive guide to wildlife prints and tracks. It features the tracks of more than 100 species of mammals, birds, frogs, toads, salamanders, snakes, lizards, turtles, insects, and other invertebrates, all common to the eastern United States.



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.

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.