



# MISSISQUOI MATTERS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF  
MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Summer, 2021



## Summer Activities Schedule at Missisquoi NWR 29 Tabor Road, Swanton, VT 05488

### Eagle Point WMA Bird Walk

Saturday, June 5th, 8 am

Join the Friends of Missisquoi NWR along with the Memphremagog Watershed Association for a morning of birding and exploration at Eagle Point Wildlife Management Area. This 420 acre tract of property on the shore of Lake Memphremagog, near the town of Newport, became part of the Missisquoi NWR in 2010 and is managed in partnership with the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department.

The property consists of a mix of upland and wetland habitats including northern hardwood forest, hemlock seepage forest, managed grassland, and a diverse wetland complex formed around Hall's Creek. The varied habitats should produce an impressive number of species to be seen. Note: there are no facilities on the property.

Current COVID guidelines will be followed. Please plan on wearing a facemask if not fully vaccinated. This walk will be led by Julie Filiberti.

#### Directions to Eagle Point:

- From East Main Street in Newport (VT5) turn left on Sias Avenue (heading north) – .6 miles
- Sias Avenue turns into Darling Hill Road – 1.6mi
- Continue straight on North Derby Road – 2.1mi
- At the end, make a left onto Eagle Point Farm Road (T-17) and follow to Eagle Point WMA – 1.4 mi

### Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks

3rd Saturday of each month, 8 to 10 am

We are pleased to announce that we are resuming our monthly bird monitoring walks after being suspended for over a year due to COVID. Ken Copenhaver and Julie Filiberti will lead the walks 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 133 months of walks, we have recorded 159 species of birds. Registration for the walks is not required. *continued >> p. 2*



## Missisquoi Matters

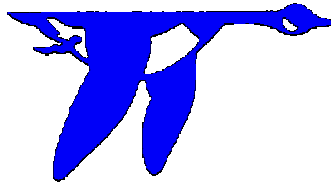
is the quarterly newsletter of the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, dedicated to promoting a better awareness, appreciation, conservation, and responsible utilization of the Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge.

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**The MNWR Visitor Center is closed until further notice.**

## Monthly Bird Monitoring Walks (continued)

**COVID Notice:** We will be following Vermont state COVID-19 protocols for outdoor activities. We ask that you stay home if you are feeling ill and to wear a mask if you are unvaccinated and when you can't maintain a safe social distance.

The schedule for the next three months is:

**June 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.

**July 17: Maquam/Black Creek Trail.** Meet at the parking lot located on Rte. 78, approx. 2½ miles west of Swanton village.

**August 21: Jeep Trail.** Meet at the Louie's Landing parking lot located on Rte. 78, approx 3½ miles west of Swanton village. From there we will drive to the trail head at Mac's Landing.

## "Art on the Refuge", virtual edition - continues until July 16th

The Friends of Missisquoi annual art show, *Art at the Refuge*, began the weekend of our World Migratory Bird Day event, on May 15th.

We are excited to have the art show back this year after last year's cancellation due to the pandemic, and we've modified it to allow for flexibility and to keep everyone safe. The show is presented as an online gallery so viewers will be able to enjoy the artwork as the Refuge building remains closed. As usual, the focus is on birds and their habitats, and includes birds that are seen on the Refuge.

In addition to being able to view each *Art at the Refuge* entry, information about each artist is included, and artworks that are for sale are noted. To purchase artwork, on-line viewers should contact the artist directly. Contact information for artists is provided.

To view the show, go to  
[www.friendsofmissisquoi.org/artshow](http://www.friendsofmissisquoi.org/artshow).

**If and when new Refuge events are scheduled, they 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 [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/)**

## **WMBD at the Refuge a Great Success!**

Thank you to everyone that joined us for a unique celebration of World Migratory Bird Day! With the Refuge visitor's center closed due to COVID-related restrictions, several of our events became virtual or self-led. We enjoyed some excellent weather and dozens of people came out to enjoy the refuge, between May 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.

We began our extended weekend on Thursday evening with an online presentation "All About Eagles" from Margret Fowle, a biologist with Audubon Vermont. On Friday, one of Vermont's premiere birding educators, Maeve Kim, gave a presentation on "Birding Missisquoi". Both events were very well attended. If you missed them, you can still catch them on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/friendsofmissisquoi/videos/>

Friday also marked the launching of our annual Art Show! With the visitor center closed, we moved to an online format and have dozens of works from a number of talented artists on display, many available for sale. Check it out at <http://friendsofmissisquoi.org/artshow/> and support the artists that support the refuge! The show will run through July 16<sup>th</sup>.

Of course, the weekend was all about the birds. On Saturday & Sunday, participants in our "Big Weekend Challenge" collectively submitted 51 checklists to eBird, documenting 119 species of birds on the refuge, the highest total in 22 years of Bird Day events! Small groups and individuals collectively spent more than 75 hours on the refuge, covering nearly 80 miles of trails and rivers. With the expanded format this year, we also included Eagle Point, the refuge's property in the North-east Kingdom. This addition opened up some opportunities for unusual species, including our 1<sup>st</sup> ever Bird Day sighting of a Ring-necked Pheasant! Redwing Blackbirds were the most prevalent species, appearing on 49 of 51 checklists. 14 species appeared on only one checklist:

- American Wigeon
- American Black Duck
- Hooded Merganser
- Ring-necked Pheasant
- American Woodcock
- Common Loon

- Eastern Screech-Owl
- Red-eyed Vireo
- Bank Swallow
- Eastern Bluebird
- Orchard Oriole
- Blackburnian Warbler
- Palm Warbler
- Pine Warbler

Thanks again to all who came out this year! We're sure things will look different for next year's WMDB events, but this year's will be a tough one to beat!

The top performer in each of the following categories will receive prizes donated by the Friends Gift Shop.

### **Most distance covered**

Dave Southwick	11.875 miles
Walter Medwid	10.56 miles
Rich Kelley	8.68 miles

### **Most time spent birding**

Rich Kelley	880 minutes
Julie Filiberti	793 minutes
Ken Copenhaver	720 minutes

### **Most species photographed**

Kayley Dillon	18 species
Dave Southwick	12 species
Sabrina Barney	10 species

### **Most locations birded**

Rich Kelley	7
Ken Copenhaver / Laura Gouthreau	5
Julie Filiberti / Jim Osborn	4

### **River / Water**

Jason Crooks, Laura Gouthreau and Rich Kelley with 42 species paddling  
Dave Southwick with 28 species on two boat trips

### **Early Bird**

Julie Filiberti had the earliest checklist, with a 4:30am start on Sunday

### **Night Owl**

Erin Creley had the latest checklist, staying out until 7:52 Saturday evening

### **Best Photo**

Matthew Bode - Black and White Warbler



**A Few of the Photos Taken by WMBD Birders**



Black and White Warbler by Matthew Bode - Winner of Best Photo



Tree Swallow by Ken Copenhaver



Baltimore Oriole by Julie Filiberti



Rose-breasted Grosbeak by Julie Filiberti



Spotted Sandpiper by Ken Copenhaver



Black-capped Chickadees by J. Filiberti

## Refuge Managers Update - May, 2021

by Ken Sturm, Refuge Manager, Missisquoi NWR



Spring is always a welcome time of year and I expect even more so for all of us coming out of a long dark winter of social distancing and isolation. Getting outside has been one of the things many have turned to during the last year of Covid restrictions. I

am happy to hear many tell me that they “found” the refuge in the last year and have enjoyed walking the trails and enjoying the wildlife they see. It has been interesting to note how often our parking areas are full of cars and with our new trail counters at three sites we can now really see which trails are being used most, and even when the highest use days are. The results are pretty steady with the Black Creek/Maquam Creek trail being the most popular of the three trails we monitor by a long shot.

**Trail Use - January 1 to May 4, 2021  
Missisquoi NWR**

**Black Creek / Maquam Trail - 4,928**

**Railroad Passage Trail - 1,723**

**Stephen Young Marsh Trail - 1,224**

So perhaps using this information you may decide to take the extra few minutes to drive to Tabor Road and explore the Stephen J. Young Marsh or Railroad Passage trails, where you will possibly have the area more to yourself. All the trails on the refuge offer slightly different experiences and all are great with kids. And, as always, you can reach out to me to let me know of any trail problems you experience.

As the spring turns into summer our staff are busy with the multitude of projects which can only be done during this time of year. Our biologist, Judy, has been quite busy conducting a variety of inventory and monitoring projects including a

survey for the Eastern meadowlark, a grassland bird which has declined by more than 95% in the last 50 years. For those birders out there, walking the Discovery Trail or the beginning of the Railroad Passage trail will likely get you that meadowlark for your year list if you do not have one already. More importantly, it is great to know that refuge grassland management is still providing productive places for this imperiled species to nest.

The refuge has also engaged the Vermont Center for Ecostudies to help conduct native bee inventories on the refuge. Primarily focusing on grasslands this season, we hope to develop more information that can help guide management decisions in these habitats. We are also curious to see if the refuge harbors any unique or rare species in the state. Stay tuned and I hope to be able to report some of the findings in the next newsletter.

I wanted to also recognize the great work the Friends of Missisquoi NWR did this spring hosting the World Migratory Bird Day event. More details about the event are in the newsletter, but it was amazing to see the support from the public, volunteer speakers, and trail leaders that helped make this year’s event a complete success. I look forward to the coming years where we can take the successes and innovations learned from this year and make the coming year’s events just as good or even better!

Lastly, I am sure many of you are wondering when the refuge Visitor’s Center will reopen to the public. As I write this article, I am also gathering the required data from the Vermont Health Department and the Center for Disease Control to submit a reopening request. This request is based on safety of both visitors and refuge staff on reopening an indoor space, including the evaluation of local and non-resident visitation. It is my hope that we can see the Visitor’s Center reopen sometime in mid to late June. Until that time, I hope to see you on the trails or on the river, enjoying Missisquoi’s amazing habitats and the wildlife it supports!

## To Nap or Not, That is the Question

by Judy Sefchick, Wildlife Biologist, Missisquoi NWR



Make no mistake about it, there's no napping going on at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge this summer. Unless, you spell it 'k-n-a-p-p-i-n-g,' and mean, "a search and destroy mission for invasive spotted knapweed plants in refuge grasslands." If 'knapping' isn't happening, then 'knotting' may well be, since Japanese knot-

weed control efforts are taking place along the banks of the Missisquoi River as well. This summer, "To nap or not...that is the question!"

You may be asking, "What is spotted knapweed and what does it look like?" With pale slender leaves and moderate height, this invasive looks just like any other wildflower or weed at first glance. But take a closer look: if you see flowers that resemble tiny pine-apples with punk-rock-style spiked purple hairdos, then you've *spotted* this knapweed.



Don't let its pretty appearance fool you though - spotted knapweed, like all invasive plants that I've come to know, has plenty of tricks up its sleeves! Besides having a tap root that extends to the other side of the planet, spotted knapweed flowers for 3 months (June through August) and produces around 1,000 seeds per plant. Seeds can remain viable in the soil for 5 years or more, but that's not knapweed's best trick. Stopping at nothing to outwit, outcompete, and outlast other plants, this invasive may even resort to chemical warfare, by making and secreting chemicals into the soil that kill other plants!

Japanese knotweed, with its bamboo-like stems, heart-shaped leaves, and reddish twigs, doesn't look

like anything out of the ordinary - until, of course, you realize that it's 10 ft. tall and is the only species of plant on the riverbank for miles around! How does knotweed grow so far so fast? Not only does it produce lots of seeds from the numerous tiny white flowers that bloom in August and September, but it also spreads through an extensive network of rhizomes that can send shoots 65 feet away from the parent plant! Sadly, it seems that almost nothing can hinder or destroy naughty knotweed - it only takes a half-inch long root or stem fragment to break off, for colonization at a new site to occur.

With ingenious invasive plants like knapweed and knotweed, is it any wonder that hand-pulling, digging, cutting, and mowing, have done little to stop their spread? There's no denying it: the time has come for the refuge to practice some chemical warfare of its own. As you may expect, spraying chemicals on a National Wildlife Refuge is a *big* deal and not a decision to be made lightly. Not only does the refuge have to research and select the least toxic chemicals for the job, but all chemicals have to be reviewed and approved by the Services' Regional and Washington Offices as well.



This July and August, it's time to nip these plants in the buds (literally!). Look out everyone, the staff at Missisquoi NWR is armed and dangerous! With spray tanks on our backs, and nozzles in our hands, we may look like something out of the movie *Ghostbusters*; but don't worry, the only thing we're busting are invasive plants!

Controlling invasive plants is not glamorous work. Let's face it, walking transects through eighty acres of tall grasslands, looking for purple flowers, while swatting deer flies, and dealing with 90 degree heat, has its own set of challenges. After all, maintaining quality habitats for fish and wildlife resources is one of the Fish and Wildlife Services' most important missions. Look out invasive plants: this year and for years to come, there will be no napping at Missisquoi!



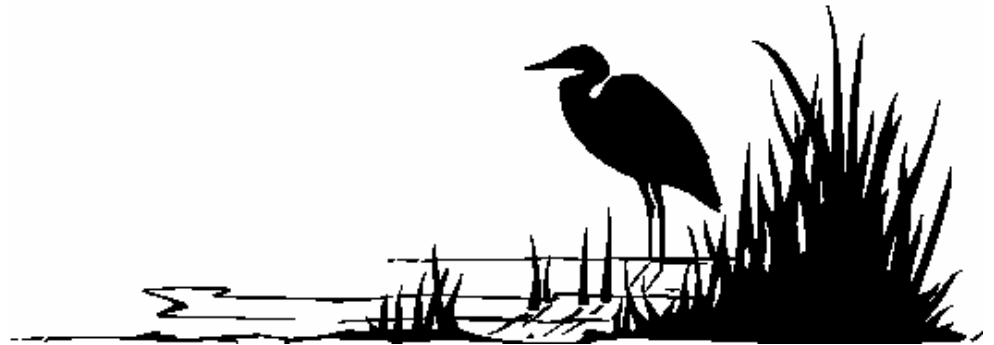
FRIENDS OF MISSISQUOI NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

BI-MONTHLY BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, July 14th, 2021 at 6:30 pm by Zoom

email [info@friendsofmissisquoi.org](mailto:info@friendsofmissisquoi.org) if you'd like to attend via Zoom

Members are always welcome & encouraged to attend. Next board meeting is Sept. 8th at 6:30 pm



Please tell us how to serve you better - The Friends of Missisquoi NWR Board is eager to know more about the kind of programs, outings, or activities you would like to have offered on or about the refuge. Please email your suggestions and comments to [info@friendsofmissisquoi.org](mailto:info@friendsofmissisquoi.org). Thanks!

Yes! I want to support the Friends of Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge and its programs with my membership. My dues include a subscription to Missisquoi Matters and a 10% discount on items at the Friends Gift Shop. Enclosed is my contribution of:

Membership Level

- \$10 Student
- \$15 Individual
- \$20 Family / Classroom
- \$50 Supporting
- \$100 Steward
- \$250 Life / Business
- \$1000 Patron

Would you like to receive your newsletter by postal mail or by email? Please circle one:

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